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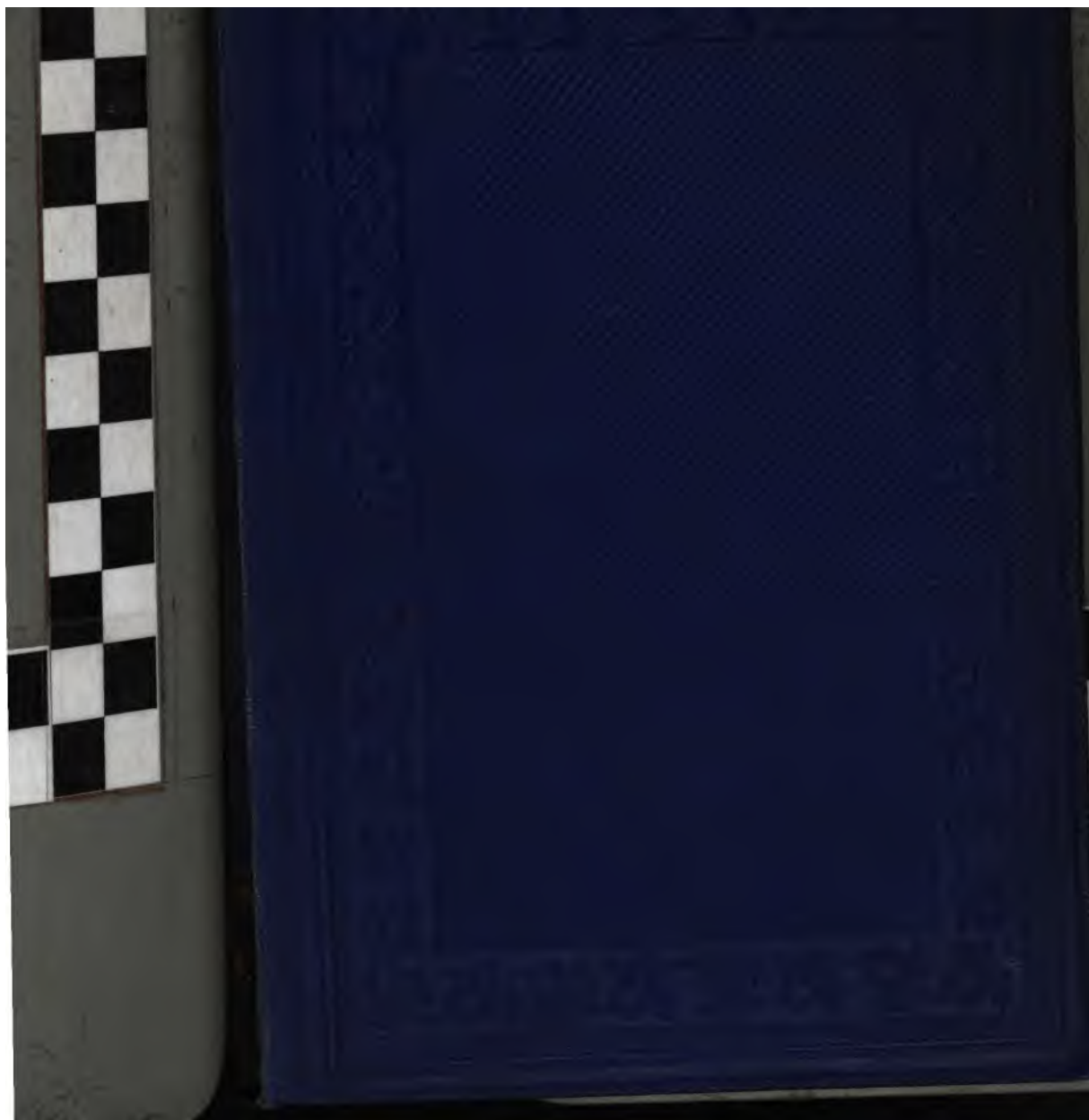
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L I T T L E E S T E L L A .

A N D

O T H E R F A I R Y T A L E S .

LONDON:

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.



"Hast thou faith then?" asked the Sage.

"I will believe whatsoever you shall command me, father," she meekly replied.

THE POLYMER

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LITTLE ESTELLA

AND

OTHER FAIRY TALES.

FOR THE YOUNG.

MACMILLAN AND CO.

Cambridge :

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LITTLE ESTELLA

AND

THE CIRCLET OF DIAMONDS.

THE Princess Xarifa reclined one day upon her silken cushions, looking forth from the window of her apartment on the valley below. Within, it was cool and shady, the floor was of white marble, and Xarifa's little feet, in their embroidered slippers, rested lovingly on a footstool of fresh roses of every shade; draperies of pale green silk adorned the walls, save where they were covered with scrolls of blue and scarlet touched with gold, containing wise or sacred sentences.

Through a silver grating inserted in the floor ascended the delicate fragrance of Oriental perfumes, which rising to the perforated ceiling passed into the adjoining gallery.

Outside this cool retreat, it was breathless noon. The little stream that threaded the valley shrank from the blaze of the burning sun into the shelter of the sedges on its margin, and nothing living ventured abroad save the large and brilliant butterflies, which could not afford to lose one sunny hour of their bright existence.

The favourite attendant of the Princess sat close by, fanning her, and from time to time glancing at her mistress with an anxious countenance; perceiving that Xarifa's dark liquid eyes wore an expression of melancholy which was not usual to them, and that she had been weeping.

"Little Estella, why do you look at me so wistfully? What ails my countenance, child? Is it no longer so loving towards thee? Nay, thou must not imagine I shall be changed, though my estate be so."

"No, kind and gracious lady, it is not that I fear; but you are sad, and I am wondering wherefore, when such bright fortunes are about to dawn upon you."

A long silence ensued. The little maiden feared she had been too bold; and Xarifa, looking out again upon the distant hills and into the vale below, was debating with herself how to answer. She loved and trusted little Estella, who was wise above her years. She was a captive child, who had been taken in battle when very young, and had been brought up with her young mistress, more as a companion than a slave. At length the Princess said,—

“Then I will tell you what troubles me, Estella; for you are one to think, and not to speak again, I need not therefore caution you to silence. It now wants scarce one week to my marriage. Ahmed has prevailed with my father: for though he is of lower estate than I, yet my elder sisters having each married kings, he is less unwilling to thwart me. Moreover, though not of royal birth, Ahmed is chief of his house; he is brave and wealthy, and my father loves him well. It troubles me now, that I think myself unworthy to be his bride. Mine is the portion of the youngest, it is scarce becoming


my rank that it is so small. Then, I am not learned as he is, for though in battle he is ever foremost, none can excel him in all peaceful arts. Who can touch the lute as he can, or sing such thrilling ditties? And to see him guide the colour-reeds! Look, Estella, but yesterday when I said I wished he might never go to battle more, he wrote me this sentence—

“ ‘Paradise lies beneath the shadow of swords.’

I saw him lay on the fair colours, and set it in the golden ink on the wall, where I can behold it as I recline here ; and beneath it is written—

“ ‘The wife of a warrior must have a warrior’s soul.’

I went, as thou knowest, Estella, to visit the wise man who cast my horoscope ; he told me my life would be fortunate and happy, but I said I was not satisfied with that, for I desired to be worthy of my noble husband : to be wise and good, as well as fair, in his sight. He made me this answer, ‘There is,’ he said, ‘one way of becoming so. In the chain of mountains which divides this



from the neighbouring kingdom, there is an enchanted mine.'

“‘The Gnomes that dwell in its secret caves have been there for long ages. They possess many curious arts in perfection, and amongst others that of working costly jewels into forms of marvellous beauty, which contain charms of various kinds. They have in their guardianship a circlet of diamonds, which has the power of inspiring its wearer with all the fairest mental gifts. Knowledge to such an one will become intuition. To every one of the diamonds which compose it a ruby is appended, and these add to the inspiration of knowledge the lovelier gifts of the soul; the possessor of this priceless diadem would therefore be always gentle and loving; one perpetual stream of good and kind thoughts would originate in her who should be crowned with it. To reach it is the difficulty, and there,’ he continued, ‘I cannot help you. I cannot even tell you in which mountain the mine is hidden, and if I could, I should not have the power to obtain the treasure for you. This,

however, is nothing to me ; I have told you all I know, and if you think it worth possessing, it will yet be yours ; for what mind ever strongly willed and did not attain ?

“ This is why I am sad, Estella, for I long to possess that crown of jewels, more than ever thirsty pilgrim in arid deserts longed for the draught that would give him life. There is nothing I would not do, nothing I would not give to obtain it. But, if I ask my father to send messengers and procure it for me, he will only tell me I am childish to believe the tale ; and say I am his youngest darling, fair and wise enough for Ahmed, though he be his chosen counsellor. Besides, it would avail nothing to send, for the Santon declared that only a fair maiden might win it. Yes !” continued the Princess, clasping her hands, while her eyes filled with tears, “ there is nothing I would not do, and nothing I would not give, to obtain that priceless treasure.”

“ Madam,” said little Estella, kneeling before the Princess ; while her golden curls, drooping on the

purple cushions, caught the light of a straggling sunbeam which fell through the shaded lattice ; “ dear and gracious lady, for one great boon *I* will seek this jewelled diadem and bring it to you on the eve of your marriage.”

“ The boon ? Tell me quickly, dear child ! ” cried the Princess.


“ My freedom ! ” said the maiden, as with a burning cheek and sparkling eyes she looked up to read Xarifa’s countenance.

“ Thy freedom, Estella ? ” replied her mistress, in a grieved tone ; “ is this indeed the wish of your heart ? Have I dreamed this long time, believing that I had a friend whose service to me was all love ? who, though all the world were false, would still be true ? That in the midst of a court where faces belie hearts, there was one transparent soul which could hide from me no secret ? Take then thy freedom ; I would not thou shouldst buy it at so perilous a cost.”

“ My beloved princess, hear me,” cried Estella, in an agony of supplication ; “ listen but one moment ;

do not so grievously mistake me !—Think not, were I free, that I would leave you. Foolish I may be, but not ungrateful ; not all the treasures of the East would tempt me to forego your service. But oh ! to be free ! If I have served you for love hitherto, how much more then ! Truly my chains have been of gold, and I have lacked nothing the most beneficent kindness could bestow ; but, to stand before you free ! I should be bound with fetters then, which nothing but death could break.”

“Poor child !” said the Princess, troubled at her tears ; “forgive the unkind chiding words ; thou shouldst have had this boon long since, had I dreamed how thy heart was set upon it. Surely things pass around us, and very near us, of which we have no knowledge. For me, I never thought of thee as aught less dear than a younger sister. Kneel no longer ; from this moment thou art free. I will speak of it to the King my father, and it shall be proclaimed in the palace. Rise, mine own free maiden, and weep no more !”



“You forget, kindest and most gracious, that my boon was conditional. I will not take the gift I prize as much as life, without due service done for it. I will bring you the diamond coronet on the eve of your marriage.”

“Little Estella,” said the Princess, smiling kindly, and smoothing the sunny curls with her soft fair hand, “we must think of it no more. What ! thou poor child, to tread the rocky path, endure the burning heat, cross the deep chasms where the mountain streams course each other brawling ! Thou to venture into the mysterious hiding-places of those strange unearthly beings !”

At this moment the silken hangings were drawn aside, and two black slaves entered with coffee, which was served in jewelled cups ; and sweet-meats, delicately tinted with pale and beautiful colours like the petals of flowers.

It was time for the Princess to take her siesta, previously to receiving the ladies of the court, who were to consult with her on various things connected with her marriage, now so near at hand.

So spreading before her the delicate handkerchief with its massive fringe of gold, and placing the silver vase of tepid rose-water on an amber pedestal by her side, Estella now withdrew. She would be required no more until the evening, when the Princess would expect her attendance for a moonlight walk in the inclosed gardens of the palace; a lovely retreat, where bowers of roses, sparkling fountains, sweet perfumes, and the songs of nightingales, made an earthly Paradise.

Immediately on leaving the Princess, Estella sought out the old astrologer, who alone could give her the information she desired. He was seated poring over parchments, whose mystic characters had grown dim with age.

When at length she had aroused his attention, the old man heard her request, looking at her the while with a keen glance to read her soul in her clear bright eyes. He then said,—

“It is a slender frame to endure hardships; tender feet to tread on stones; tiny hands to part asunder thorns and briars; a little head to

plan ; and bright eyes to grow blind beneath the burning sun ! But, hast thou patience ?”

“ I have been a slave from my childhood,” said Estella, “ and I have never murmured, though the fetters pierced my heart.”

“ Hast thou courage ?”

“ I am now free,” said the maiden ; “ shall I not dare anything for love of her who freed me ?”

“ Hast thou faith then ?” asked the sage.

“ I will believe whatsoever you shall command me, father,” she meekly replied.

“ Then,” said the Santon, “ listen. Go forward, but it must be on foot, and thou must set forth to-night, that thou mayst reach the mountains by daybreak. Where the mine in which the gnomes dwell may be found, I cannot tell thee. But behold these transparent glasses ; they are, as thou seest, of a rosy colour. Wear them on thy journey ; they will show thee such wonderful things as thou hast never dreamed of ; and they will warn thee especially when thou approachest the mountain where the enchanted mine is ; and save thee such

wandering, searching, failure, and distress, as none can imagine save those who have striven as I have done for the space of one whole year, by day and night, to find what thou art seeking. I was then told by a magician that none but a fair maiden who should have the patience, faith, and courage, which thou sayest are thine, could see aright with these glasses. Go thy way, therefore, and good spirits speed thee, thou fair child ! Now leave me, I would fain lose no more of the daylight, which fades apace ; for I must recast the horoscope of this royal house, and all things must be in readiness, for the moon is at her full.”

Then Estella, wending her way to the palace, took thence a mantle that wrapped her to the feet, and a thick veil ; and having ventured in to kiss the brow of the sleeping Princess, and ascertain that the attendant slaves were on the alert, and relaxed not the gentle moving of the feather fans, she stole softly down the marble stairs, and unobserved quitted the palace on her dangerous and lonely journey.

The way at first lay through lanes of cork-trees,

mingled with whose verdant foliage and massive stems the silvery grey of the olive-leaves fluttered pale and trembling in the moonlight. In the shadow of their branches the fire-flies were glancing in perpetual motion, and the hum of large beetles whirring past, like a lute touched by the wind, fell drowsily on the ear. At intervals, the rich notes of nightingales saluting each other from neighbouring groves filled the air with music ; while in the receding distance, the grave and solemn tones of the evening bell, and the tinkling of guitars, rose faintly from the far-off city.

Little Estella walked quickly forward, turning neither to the right nor to the left ; she was so absorbed in the contemplation of her mission, and the haste with which she strove to reach the mountains before daybreak, that she took little note of the lovely scene, save that a sense of enjoyment and of undefinable happiness made her step elastic and kept her heart from fear.

By degrees the moon slowly sank upon the horizon's brink, and disappeared. A short interval

of starlight ensued ; the fire-flies vanished ; the nightingales grew silent ; and all nature slept in deep repose. Estella would not pause to rest, but walked straight on, determined in purpose, until the trees standing in thinner groups on either side the way gradually arranged themselves into a background which hid the city, the palace, and all she had left behind, and ascending the summit of a rising eminence, she beheld the dawn of day.

Little rosy clouds, the heralds of the sun, were ascending the eastern skies. Then a few bright rays, the fingers of the dawn, drew aside the crimson curtains of the morning, and every flower and blade of grass started into living beauty, as all the changes of the landscape below emerged smiling from their sleep, and the lingering shadows one by one disappeared.

Estella found herself in an unknown land. The peaks of the farthest mountains, flinging their veils of mist into the valleys, rose before her blushing in the early light. She could not yet determine for which of them she was bound ; but putting on

her rosy glasses she sat down under the shadow of a spreading oak, round whose branches a wild vine clung, and gathering some of its ripe clusters began to break her fast.

As she sat there delighted and amazed with all she saw, numbers of beautiful butterflies alighted on the flowers that grew in profusion around, each bearing between its wings a tiny sprite clad in glittering robes, who guided its movements by a gossamer bridle. As the butterflies, expanding their bright wings, poised themselves on the leaves, their fairy riders crept into the flower-cups, and bathed in the pearly dew which lay there yet undried by the sun, and then fed themselves with the honey-drop that each contained. Presently, a butterfly all violet and gold, whose wings, larger and more magnificent than the rest, were fringed with white like an ermine robe, came slowly floating down; and through her glasses Estella saw it was carrying the queen of the fairies, whose brow was adorned with a crown of gold-powdered flower stamens. Whilst these tiny beings were fluttering

and sporting about, an alarm was given, and from beneath the mossy stones which were strewn around, a number of green and yellow lizards appeared, evidently with sinister designs; they ran incredibly fast, but before they could put forth their venomous tongues, the butterflies arose in a cloud, and were out of sight in a moment.

Many scenes like this Estella beheld through her magic glasses, which peopled the woods, and hills, and valleys on her way with beings invisible to mortal eyes not so aided.

She now rose refreshed, and went onwards until the sun burned hot in mid-heaven, when, being overcome with fatigue, she sought the friendly shelter of a group of trees by the way-side, and lying down upon the cool grass near a brook which ran trickling by, she fell asleep.

She did not awake till the shadows of evening were beginning to fall. The sun was setting full upon the mountains, which seemed the entrance to some enchanted country. Of their peaks and rocky projections, some were clothed with the loveliest

verdure; others, bare and sharp, rose like towers and minarets, castles and palaces. Long after the light had faded from the grey landscape that she left behind, Estella walked on with her rosy glasses, watching the sunbeams creep higher and higher, but brilliant to the last, until the red glow faded from the highest peak, and she was surprised to find herself in the obscurity of twilight. She was beginning to feel lonely. The first excitement of the undertaking had died away. She was sadly weary; her little feet, clad only in the thin slippers in which she was wont to tread silently across the marble floors of the palace, were wounded and bleeding; her silken curls, once so glossy and graceful, hung dishevelled around her, and she began to think how lonely was this wild scene, so new and awful in its solitude to her, who had never wandered farther than the palace gardens. She knew that wolves were hunted amongst these mountains, and that bears had been seen here. Every sound alarmed her. She started trembling, as a herd of swift-footed antelopes swept by, frightened at her pre-

sence, lest some terrible beast should be pursuing them, which would turn and rend her. The chattering of the monkeys, which sat grinning above her head, filled her with fear. Darkness followed swiftly upon the twilight ; the moon rose later, and the stars gave no light to guide her timid steps.

How could she hope to escape these perils ? Should she ever reach the enchanted mine ? Would it be possible to turn back ? Alas ! she knew no more the homeward path, than that which lay before her. She dared not stay to rest. What might not be lurking in those brakes and coverts ? Surely she heard the distant howlings of the hungry wolves, descending from the hills in search of prey ? No : it was the brawling of a mountain stream in some deep hollow ; it must be near, but she could not see it in the darkness. What if she should fall into the gaping chasm, and be gulfed in the chilly waters ! Of what use were her glasses without the light ? Perhaps after all the Santon had deceived her. He had asked her if she had faith ; ah ! then she was full of hope and happiness. He

had warned her of difficulties (they at least were real), but she had made light of them then! Poor child, her tears fell fast as she thought of her beloved Princess, how she would grieve, even amid the splendours of the bridal festivities, if little Estella returned no more! Yet it was some consolation that she would die in serving her, faithful to the last. She only hoped death would not come in the shape of some wild and savage creature who would tear her to pieces; but she was so faint and tired, that she thought she should soon fall by the wayside, and sleep to awake no more.


At this moment, as she stood trembling and doubting what course to pursue, she raised her eyes and beheld, a few steps before her, a bright light burning on the mountain side. With renewed courage she hastened towards it, and saw that it shone from the mouth of a cave, where a very tiny figure was seated close to a lantern of crystal, in which were imprisoned a number of fire-flies. As she approached, she heard a musical sound as of innumerable silver hammers at work

in the interior of the mountain. When she came near, the little figure sprang to its feet, and said,—

“Welcome, fair maiden, I have been watching for you this long time ; King Tourmaline is awaiting you ; follow me, and do you carry the lamp.”

So Estella took the lamp, and the little gnome went before her, dancing and tumbling, and performing the most extraordinary gambols.

They entered a long winding passage in the rock, which Estella thought would never end ; but as they advanced, it became more and more spacious ; stalactites, and many-coloured crystals, glittered in the passing light of the little lamp, and hung from the ceiling and the walls in fantastic shapes ; each arched division of the cave appearing more beautiful than the last, until at length, turning round a sharp projecting angle, a dazzling burst of light streamed upon them, and Estella beheld a vast hall supported by columns of porphyry, carved with inimitable skill in the resemblance of palm-trees.



The floor was inlaid with jasper and mother-of-pearl; and the lights which illuminated the hall were held in candelabra springing from the walls, each of which resembled flowers wrought in precious stones; while in the midst rose a large orange-tree, whose leaves were of emeralds, and whose flowers of pearl held each a taper. Round this tree, which stood as it were on an islet, played the jets of tiny fountains shaped like water-lilies, which cooled and freshened the air.

As soon as Estella and her guide appeared, the silver hammers ceased, and there was silence. Then she observed numbers of gnomes resembling her little guide, seated in different parts of the hall, working at the setting of most costly jewels which glittered like coloured stars. At length a shrill voice cried,—

“Where is Estella? Bring me the golden-haired little Estella!”

And several of the gnomes ran to lead her forward to their King Tourmaline. He sat on a silver throne wrought in the most exquisite groups

of fern-leaves, mingled with the vine and hop-plants; and was crowned with a single diamond. Before him, on a wide low table, which stood upon twelve silver mushrooms, were spread such treasures as Estella had never dreamed of; emeralds and rubies were there, and sapphires blue as the sea, some rough from the mine, others partly formed into rich ornaments, the settings of which no earthly jeweller ever imagined. Flowers bloomed, perfect as if newly opening on their parent plant, each of a single gem; insects—the diamond beetles, and the violet and crimson flies of other climes; and humming-birds whose plumage was of jewels.

“What do you come hither for, little one?” said King Tourmaline, looking kindly on her.

“Sire,” replied the maiden, kneeling before the King, “I am come thus far to ask of you a great boon. You have in your palace a circlet of diamonds. My mistress, the Princess Xarifa, earnestly desiring to derive wisdom from its magic power, prays you to deliver it to me; and I have come to fetch it.”

The King looked at her smiling, for some minutes,

and said, "You are a good and faithful child, Estella ; you have come on a long and perilous journey, and shall not depart empty-handed. Talc," addressing one of his subjects, "bring hither the circlet of diamonds which mine own hands wrought in the African mines."

Talc obeyed, and immediately brought a box of sandal-wood, whose golden clasps the King unloosed, when Estella beheld a coronal of magnificent brilliants, the centre star in which glittered with an indescribable lustre.

"Will this satisfy your mistress?" said the King, watching her surprise and wonder. Estella was on the point of saying "Yes," and expressing her admiration as the King gave it into her hands, when suddenly her countenance fell ; and looking up with tears in her eyes, she said,—

"Ah ! King Tourmaline, I am but a child, neither wise nor learned enough to fathom mysteries, but is this indeed the circlet my Princess so desired to have ? Surely you would not deceive my ignorance and simplicity ?"

"Well," replied the King, "speak now, what ails the coronet? Is it not rich and rare, and costlier than ever was worn by earthly queen?"

"Beautiful it is, and rare," replied Estella, hesitating; "but it lacks the pendant rubies."

"And what of that?" said the King; "here are diamond drops as costly and more radiant."

"I see them, gracious sire, yet it is not their lustre I think of, but the wise man spoke of the rubies as imparting some separate gift."

"Ah! thou pearl amongst earthly maidens," cried the King, "thou knowest not what thou hast done. None of these things can be given up by us except they be particularly inquired for. Hadst thou been satisfied with this, dazzled by its beauty and unthinking of its worth, thy mistress had indeed excelled in every mental gift, but there is a charm in the ruby pendants that her husband will prize far more. Without them, she would have become cold-hearted, self-engrossed, severe. With them, she will have all the tenderest sympathies of your nature. Loving, gentle, and kind, she will live

the delight and blessing of those around her.— See what thou hast won for her!” and opening an ivory casket, King Tourmaline drew forth the priceless circlet, and showed her the large rubies that hung from its diamond stars.

“And now,” he continued, glancing compassionately at the little soiled and torn slippers, the faded cheeks, and disordered hair, “take the child into the mother-of-pearl chamber, and let her rest for to-night. She needs it. Take the casket, Estella, and keep it ever near thee with jealous care. But first, tell me what dost thou desire for thyself? Amidst all these treasures, surely thou must covet some?”

The little maiden, receiving the casket, bent before the King, and said,—

“Nothing, gracious sire, for my guerdon is already paid. The Princess Xarifa has made me free. I am no longer a slave, and I desire nothing more.”


“Then I will give thee this,” said the King, and he placed in the bosom of her dress a spray from the boughs of the orange-tree, whose pearls and emeralds were lovely to behold. “If thou shouldst

at any time need our help, sprinkle this with water, and it shall not be in vain. Now go and rest thee, child, for thou hast to journey back again."

So the gnomes lighted Estella to an adjoining apartment, whose walls were lined with mother-of-pearl, and whose floor was set with lapis-lazuli. A bath of fragrant water stood in the centre, and beside a couch of snowy eider-down was laid a change of garments, scented with Eastern perfumes.

Sweet and calm was the little maiden's rest, and lovely were her dreams, lulled by the distant music of the silver hammers, whose different notes sounded like the ringing of a dulcimer, playing sweet unearthly melodies.

When she awoke, it was broad daylight, the gnomes and their palace had vanished away, and she found herself lifted beyond the mountains some distance on her homeward journey, stretched on a mossy bank beneath a spreading oak, the ivory casket still in her hands, and the jewelled spray in the bosom of her dress; but her rose-coloured glasses were gone.



This loss distressed little Estella very much. She no longer beheld, as she went, all the beautiful things in nature ; the silent expanding of the bright flowers ; the lovely living things ; and the fairy beings who peopled the earth and air. She lost the beauties of the varying distance, which had lured her on by easy steps at first ; making her forget the present toil in the prospect which grew lovelier as she advanced. She now saw the snakes which lurked in the long grass, and felt the stinging insects which assaulted her as she passed by. She thought the sun had never shone with such a burning heat ; even the light weight of the ivory casket became a burden, and she was fain to sit down by the roadside to rest.

At this moment she heard voices in the distance, and the tread of horses' feet, as if many people were approaching. A terrible remembrance crossed her mind, of a band of robbers known to frequent these wilds. She sprang to her feet, and hid herself amongst the trees ; secreting the spray which the Gnome-King had given her in the thickness of her

clustering hair, and wrapping the precious casket in the folds of her mantle. Scarcely had she done so, when a train of fifteen or twenty horsemen approached, bearing weapons, and looking so fierce and warlike that Estella trembled exceedingly at the sight of them; and the more so when she beheld them dismount and tie their steeds to the trees; and then, seating themselves in a circle on the grass, they began to eat and drink, talking aloud of their adventures.

They were not of the Moorish people, though they spoke the same tongue; and they appeared to think all the cruel and dishonest deeds they had perpetrated as a righteous retribution on the usurpers of their country.

He who appeared their chief was a man of stern and forbidding aspect. His features wore a look of decision and command, which fitted him to hold in check the lawless band which gathered round him.

“Pedro,” he said, “what became of the gold?”

“Noble captain, it is all in three bags in the cellar of the ruins on the hill. I fought hard for that, and

I ought to have my share. I killed three men, but the old lord, who has yet the spirit of a youth, gave me this back-handed cut, which nearly cost me two fingers."

"Content thee, thou insatiable!" said the Captain, scowling. "Am I a thief? Am I unjust, and a sordid lover of miserable gold and silver? Compare not thy spirit with mine, thou wretched barterer! I fight for revenge, and freedom; thou for plunder! Did I not give thee a fair portion but yesterday, and darest thou ask for more?"

Then as Pedro went grumbling and angry to his place, the Captain, addressing another of his followers, called him aside among the trees, out of hearing of the rest, and Estella heard him say—

"Now, Diego, thou thinkest I am an image of wood or stone, surely, or thou wouldest trifle with my patience no longer. Tell me what happened last night, and omit nothing."

"There is little enough to tell, Señor," replied Diego; "but I am mad now to think how that plot failed, laid as it was so deftly. We scaled the palace

walls just before moonrise, and the Princess Xarifa was walking alone at some distance from her attendants, musing and melancholy. 'Ah! sweet bird,' I said to myself, 'thou art caught at last!' She was just then standing before one of the little fountains that rise in the long orange walk; and to see the jewels on her arms and dress! Lazarillo and I had the muffler in our hands, and in another minute she had been ours, when that blundering marplot Pedro, who was fixing the rope-ladder to the wall, fell over on his stupid head, and she took fright, and fled away. Two minutes afterwards the gardens were filled with armed men, headed by her betrothed Ahmed, searching for us with lighted torches. I risked my life to bring thee this," and he held up a jewelled bangle which Estella knew belonged to her dear mistress, at the story of whose escape she was trembling with horror.

"Bah!" said the Captain impatiently, "it is nothing! She would not freely have sent it to me, though I did save her life on the swelling river that stormy day. Yet I thank thee, Diego; I am

not ungrateful. Thou hast done well ; and I never forget. Now to horse, my men !” he added aloud.


Little Estella began to breathe more freely, and to hope that she might yet escape their notice, when suddenly the Captain caught sight of her mantle as it was wafted aside by a passing breeze.

“Ah ! what have we here ? A pretty little maiden left forlorn in these wild regions ! And as I live, Diego,” he added aside, “it is her favourite slave ! This captive is mine,” he cried, as the robbers came crowding around. “Stand away, men, and leave her to me ; see how she trembles ! Get back, and mount ; the day is passing, and we must be at our quarters before moonrise.”

Then he caused little Estella to be lifted before Diego, who rode at his right hand, and they pursued the remainder of their way in silence. She was afraid to stir lest she should betray her treasures ; but she managed with one hand to twine her veil about her, so as to hide her curly hair, and the jewel there hidden ; and from time to time she felt the ivory casket to assure herself of its safety,

muffling it in her long mantle as well as she could. The road was precipitous, and Diego had enough to think of in managing his fiery Andalusian, so he was satisfied with warning her not to scream, as she valued her life, and finding her passive and quiescent, troubled her no more. About two hours' riding brought them to their usual rendezvous, and she was lifted to the ground, resolving in her little brave heart to die rather than confess whence she came, and what she had in her possession.

As soon as Diego had given his steed into the care of one of the men, he roughly seized Estella, and carried her down a long winding stair into a stone vault, which she thought looked sadly like a dungeon whence there was no escape, in life ; and where any murderous deed might be done in secrecy. In the midst of this stone chamber was a rough-hewn table, around which were placed wooden benches, for this was the hall where the robbers held their nocturnal revels. At the upper end of it stood a chair with some rude carving about it, in which the Captain immediately seated himself ; and whilst



the rest were absent with their horses, he ordered Diego to bring Estella before him. She trembled to see how stern he looked.

"Now, child," he said, "no trifling, nor tears. I can bear neither with patience. I know you to be the favourite attendant of the Princess Xarifa, and I desire to be told how you come to be wandering abroad alone, and on what mission you are sent. It is at your peril that you tell me false."

"I will tell you nothing false, Señor," she said, struggling to speak calmly, "but whither I have been I can tell no one, for I know not myself; neither how I came where you found me."

"Trifle not!" cried the Captain angrily. "I command you to tell me where you are going now. Take heed how you answer, for I have power to put you to a cruel death."

"I am going home," she said in a faltering voice, wishing that she was indeed safely there, but in the midst of her fear keeping a quiet and steadfast demeanour, which the robber in his heart admired, seeing how little and how defenceless she was.

At this instant the rest of the band came tumbling noisily into the vault, talking loud, and playing with their weapons in mock encounters. Estella grew very pale, and the Captain, looking black as midnight at the interruption, said hastily to Diego, "Take her away, take her away! For her sake whom I adore, these ruffians shall not touch a hair of her head."

But Pedro, who came in the first, called out, "Señor, I know that child; I have often seen her in the palace, waiting on a beautiful lady you wot of. Depend upon it, she has jewels about her!" The Captain could have felled Pedro to the ground; but he did not choose to exasperate him just then,—and all the men cried, "Jewels! plunder! search her, noble Captain!"

Then Pedro snatched away her mantle, notwithstanding her tears and prayers, and she stood in the white robes with which the kind little gnomes had replaced her soiled and torn attire, looking like a good spirit amongst evil ones.

Many voices cried "Shame," and bade him

restore the mantle, which he sullenly rolled together, and threw down before her ; when, ah ! unhappy chance ! the ivory casket fell to the ground and broke its delicate hinges, displaying to their eager and wondering eyes the lustrous jewelled circlet. Then little Estella fell on her knees before the Captain, and implored him to restore the gems, which were the Princess Xarifa's, and to set her free.

Rising up like an enraged lion, he pushed her aside, saying, "Take her away, Diego : " and making one step forward, he dashed Pedro senseless to the ground, and, in a voice of thunder, cried—

"Give me the treasure. Let no one interfere. It is mine. Carry that fellow away, and let me have no more of this."

When he was really aroused, the robbers feared their Captain : and they now hastily removed Pedro out of his sight, knowing that his life was not safe after the late provocation. Then, by a strong power of self-control, calming his voice, and seating himself in his chair of judgment, he, in order to divert

their minds and his own, commanded the plunder taken the last three days to be brought before him, and divided. For himself he reserved nothing save the jewelled coronal, and this he kept by him, ever and anon rejoicing himself with a glance at its magnificence, when he could do so without attracting attention ; murmuring at the same time disjointed sentences about the beautiful Princess, for whose fair brow they were destined, and whom he had more than once attempted to carry away from her father's palace.

Little Estella meanwhile had been placed by Diego in an adjoining chamber, and with a rough courtesy, seeing how pale and wan she looked, he placed a bunch of grapes and a pitcher of water beside her, advising her to "make haste and cheer up, as the Captain grew savage at the sight of tears ;" adding, as he glanced at the high-grated window, round whose edges the grass grew, for the vault was underground, "there is no use in hoping to escape, little one, so it is best to be resigned."

After he hurried away, fearing to lose his share of the plunder by absence, little Estella, left alone, could have comforted herself by crying all night, for she felt as if her heart would break at the loss of all her toil ; and thought that, should she ever reach home, how sorrowful and disappointed her dear Princess would be. She feared lest she should be put to some torturing death, unless, indeed, they left her to die of grief and hunger in this dark, cold dungeon. Every time she heard the shouts of the robbers, quarrelling or rejoicing over their booty, as they grew intoxicated with wine, her heart beat loud and fast ; she felt like a little trembling antelope in a tiger's den.

At length she remembered the grapes : it was night, and Diego had taken away the light, but as she groped about to find them, her hand came in contact with the pitcher of water. A thought shot across her mind. She unwound the veil which was tightly wrapped about her head and neck, and found, safely buried in her clustering hair, the jewelled spray from the enchanted orange-tree.

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She dipped her fingers in the water, and flung the drops upon it. On the instant a faint light appeared at the grating of the window, and she beheld a tiny crystal lamp hung there, filled with fire-flies, the favourite light of the gnomes: then she saw one of those active little beings twisting himself through the narrow bars, who was the next moment by her side. It was Talc, the gnome from whose especial care the jewels had been taken. He had a most comical and merry face, and had evidently been roaming abroad, for he wore a cap made out of the yellow foxglove, a thing unknown in the mines, where flowers cannot grow, though the gnomes love them so much, that they for ever imitate them in their coloured gems.

“Ah! poor little one!” he said with a patronizing air, looking up at Estella, and appearing quite unconscious of his own diminutive stature, “you have had a hard time of it; but never mind, dear child, it will soon be past; my King has sent me to take care of you; and there are more of us outside.”

"Dear Talc," she cried in a trembling voice, "what shall I do? these cruel men have robbed me of my treasures!"

"Never weep," said the little gnome in a cheery tone, "you shall regain them; and see, here is something you left behind you on the eider-down couch."

And he gave her her rose-coloured spectacles, which he bade her put on, adding, that she must push the door open very gently and follow him. She, in her fright and agitation, had believed the door locked; but Diego's eagerness after the treasure had, in truth, caused him to leave it open.

She then followed trembling into the hall, where some of the robbers still remained, stupified with wine, and fast sleeping. The Captain reclined in an uneasy posture in his chair, the casket in his hand, whose iron grasp was relaxed by slumber; though Estella grew so frightened when she saw how easily he might be awakened, that she could hardly proceed.

Talc at this moment took from his pocket a miniature silver box, made like a cage, in which

he had imprisoned a large fly. He opened the lid, and whispering into it, set the captive free, who settling upon the robber's knitted brow, caused him to lift his hand to destroy it; and in that second of time the active little gnome noiselessly seized the casket, without arousing him.

Then they trode quietly through the hall, and up the winding stair; Talc running before, and holding the lamp to every step.

When at length they emerged upon the turf above, to her surprise Estella beheld the daylight; the short night had passed away, and through her glasses she saw the other gnomes sporting about. They welcomed her with delight, and drew her to the foot of the hill where the main road wound, and there she saw a handsome mule fully caparisoned.

"King Tourmaline has sent him to you," said Talc; "he loves you well, little maiden, for you are as good as you are brave. Mount then, and hold fast the jewels, lest they be lost to you for ever; and wind your mantle around you, for you must avoid the questioning of passing travellers, and make your

way to the palace ; you will have kept your promise well, for to-morrow is the Princess Xarifa's bridal day. Now, Arriero," he added, addressing the mule, "take the child safely, and remember that from henceforward you are her slave. Farewell, little Estella, and whenever you want our help see that you remember King Tourmaline's orange-spray."

Then the gnomes, with many shrill farewells, frolicked by her side for a while, urging the mule to speed and steadiness, and then disappeared among the crevices in the hill-side.

The sensible and faithful Arriero, quitting the main road, and selecting the quiet and less frequented paths, bore Estella so swiftly along, that it was in the cool of the same evening she reached the palace ; when, alighting in the court-yard, she fed him with her own hand, and then delivered him to the care of an attendant, with many charges to treat him well. She then sought the presence of her mistress.

Entering softly into the ante-chamber, she glided through, and, lifting the pale green hangings, beheld

the Princess Xarifa asleep on her purple cushions. Estella sent away the drowsy slave, from whose hand the fan had fallen, and noiselessly seating herself in her accustomed place, waved the feathers to and fro. As she looked on Xarifa's face she noticed that it wore a sad expression, and thought, "Perhaps she has grieved to think me lost; how happy she will be to awake and find me here!"

After some minutes the Princess appeared to be dreaming some happy dream, for she smiled in her sleep, and at length, stretching out her arms with a low murmuring sound, she opened her eyes, and sat upright.

"Estella! dear little Estella!" she cried. "Then it was no dream. Ah! I thought no other hand could waft so cool and soft an air. How happy I am to see you! I thought you were lost, and I have never been happy since you went, blaming myself that I could not have kept my troubles within my own heart; for then you had not been tempted into danger for my sake. I have learned to love you doubly, dear child, since you left me. But

how pale you look ! And these little hands, how torn and disfigured ! I fear me you have suffered many hardships ?”

“Beloved Princess, I think of that no more, for behold the reward !” and she put the ivory casket into Xarifa’s trembling hand, who with a cry of joy beheld the resplendent diamonds, each with its pendent ruby. But the next instant she said—

“I must think of you now, who have done so much for me. You shall not stay at present to tell me how you won them, for you must rest. I shall not walk until moonrise, which will be late to-night, for I have been much frightened since you left me. But go now and refresh thee, child, and then come and tell me all, before I join the ladies of the Court in the gardens.”

Then clapping her hands, she ordered the attendant slaves to assist Estella, as she might require, and to give her fruit and coffee after her journey.

At the appointed time Estella reappeared, looking so fresh and lovely, notwithstanding her pallid cheeks, that the Princess delighted to look upon her.

The long narrative, with its perils, its sufferings, and its toils, engrossed her attention deeply ; and when at length it was over, she wrapped her little maiden in a close embrace, and declared that though she could never reward her as she deserved, she would not suffer her to be parted from her again.

At this instant the chords of a lute sounded from the adjoining room, and Ahmed lifted the screen, to bid his beautiful Xarifa farewell on the eve of their bridal day, and to present her with some portion of the gifts he designed for her. Before he retired, the Princess sent a slave to entreat the presence of the King her father, and desired that Estella should relate her adventures before them ; which she did with an air so modest, and in a manner so charming, that the King was enchanted with her, and said he would have the story written out, and placed in the archives of the kingdom, and that he would bestow a pension upon her, and facilitate her plans in any way in his power, if she wished to return free to her native land.

But Estella, who had never known either birth-

place, parents, or country, thanking the King for his generous kindness, assured him that to be allowed to remain in attendance on her beloved Princess was all that she desired. So it was arranged, with the sanction and approval of her betrothed, that the Princess should take Estella to her new abode, where they should never part again. Then the King, clasping on the little maiden's arm a bracelet of large emeralds, and once more expressing his appreciation of her devotion to her mistress, departed with Ahmed.

That evening the Princess presented little Estella to her ladies; and having caused her to relate to them the chief incidents of her story, gave her her freedom before them all, that it might never be called in question.

Then Arriero, who was destined on the morrow to carry his little mistress in the bridal procession, was led forth at their desire, to have his glossy coat and his beautiful trappings wondered at, and admired; which process having at length outlasted his patience, he very quietly turned round, and walked back to his own quarters.

The next morning little Estella had the delight of placing amidst the raven tresses that adorned Xarifa's beautiful brow, the Circlet of Diamonds, as the crowning ornament of her splendid bridal toilette. And so potent was their magic, that, excelling in all mental gifts, and yet more in the lovely and tender qualities which make life happy, Xarifa became the best wife, the most affectionate daughter, and finally, at her father's death, the wisest queen that ever adorned a throne.

THE ENCHANTED PEARL.



THE ENCHANTED PEARL

“He shall be fair to look upon?” said the Queen, as she rose from her cushions to lift her little baby son in her arms.

“And framed for all manly exercises?” said the King, watching the calm and immovable countenance of the fairy who was to influence the future life of the new-born Prince.

“Let great mental endowments be amongst your beneficent gifts, and let him excel in wisdom and in knowledge, that he may worthily succeed to his father’s throne,” said the Queen in her soft entreating voice.

Then answered the Fairy,—

“The elements of these I have bestowed upon

your son ; but my power has its limits. I grant him intellect, beauty, and wealth ; but happiness I cannot give. If he uses his endowments rightly, the heavenly powers will grant him happiness ; otherwise these gifts of mine will be his curse. There is a gift which only you can give—teach him self-control ; with it he can be everything, without it nothing. Behold, I place upon his tiny hand this ring, made of a single pearl. It is gifted with wondrous properties, and though now so small and fitted to his baby finger, it will grow with his growth. It will be his most treasured possession, the delight of his life ; for it has the power of reflecting what is passing in other lands, amongst the spirits of the air, amongst the fairies who dwell in forests, and the gnomes who work witchcraft in deep mines. But I forewarn you that this my gift may also become his great misfortune ; and should he at any time lose it, he will know neither safety nor peace until he find it.” As she thus spoke, the fairy vanished.

“ Ah ! ” said the King, “ this bodes misfortune

to our son, as surely as the lightning flash foretells the thunder." And he grew angry, and spoke evil of the fairy and her gifts. But his fair young Queen, whom he loved more than the richest treasures of his kingdom, came near as he stood at the open casement, and laid her delicate hand upon his mantle.

"Husband," she said, "it is not good to speak evil of the invisible powers ; the leaves are the tongues of the wind, and things that we say they repeat abroad, and the powers of the air overhear them. Let us be content ; we are forewarned, and we must do our best to avert this evil, and be thankful for the good gifts bestowed upon our son. We must teach him so to use them that they may be his happiness and not his bane."

Then the King listened to her and grew calm, for her voice was soft and sweet, and she could by its music at any time subdue his wildest moods of hot anger.

The years went by, and Prince Aulaffe grew apace. He was of a fair and noble presence, and the

courtiers vied with each other in yielding to every wish that he could form ; not only because they thought this the easiest way to please the King and Queen, but because they all loved the young Prince, who, endowed with every natural gift, seemed above the common failings of humanity.

One person there was, who looked on with a secret dread that this was not the right training for Prince Aulaffe ; it was the Queen his mother.

Often when she was alone with the King, who liked nothing better than to speak in glowing terms of his son's prowess in athletic games, of his ardour in the chase, or the princely grace with which he mingled in the gaieties of the Court, the Queen would say—

“ All this I see with delighted eyes, and a natural pride ; but is he learning the self-control we were commanded to teach him,—that spirit of moderation in all things, by which he may turn his glorious gifts to golden account ? Is he learning wisdom ? He has the highest intellectual powers and the most brilliant talents, but it is possible to possess these

and yet not be wise. Our kingdom is at this time in the plenitude of wealth and power; for your reign has been one sunshine of prosperity. Aulaffe is our only child; will he rule as you have done, for the good of your subjects? Or will he be led away into the infinite mazes of perplexity, which only they avoid who learn in their youth to walk straight-forward in the path of right?"

When the Queen had spoken after this manner, the King was wont to listen to her, as he ever did, with an inward feeling that she said truly; and though he would not acknowledge his fears, he would return to watch his son, and mark with a keen eye his ways and actions; but when Prince Aulaffe saw him standing aloof, grave and sad, he would leave his companions, and devote himself to his father in a manner so filial, gracious, and endearing, that the King was fain to forget his troubled thoughts, and would join the Prince in his knightly games; and the Queen, sitting amongst her ladies in the marble balcony, would comfort herself with the belief that so good a son would never

surely come to sorrow ; and as she flung down a flowery chaplet for the victor in these mimic frays, would forget all dark forebodings, in the pride and pleasure of the moment.

In the midst of all this, it was perhaps natural that one so accomplished as Prince Aulaffe, having thus early mastered the difficulties of an elaborate and careful education, and having visited so often that he knew them familiarly all the places of interest in his father's dominions, should be seized with an intense desire to explore other countries.

This was the first wish of his life that had ever been thwarted.

No sooner did he speak of it to the Queen, than she entreated him to forget it ; and when he talked of it to the King his father, he besought him to think of it no more ; "it would break the Queen's heart," he said, "and for himself, it would be the sorrow of his life."


For some time, therefore, the Prince strove to abandon his desire ; but it had taken too deep a hold on his imagination : he had never known

before what self-denial was, his wishes had hitherto been law, and he grew impatient under the restraint. He withdrew himself into solitary groves amidst the wide environs of the palace, and abandoned himself without resistance to the contemplation of this great wish, until unchecked it grew into a frenzy. It seemed to change his whole character, and to cast a blight over the fair promise of his youth. Once the life and soul of the young nobles his companions, he now passed them by in moody silence, or beheld their sports with a curling lip and a contemptuous indifference. No longer the delight and joy of the Queen, he now avoided as much as once he had sought those quiet hours formerly so pleasant to him, when alone with her she would tell him legends of his ancestors, of their prowess in the field and their wisdom in council ; and he hated yet more to meet her in the society of her ladies, of whom he had once delighted to learn those lighter accomplishments in which the companions of the Queen excelled. Equally did he shun the presence of the King.

whom in his present perverted state he looked upon as a stern tyrant who took pleasure in showing his power over him, by contradicting his wishes, and who made use of it to influence the minds of every one against him.

It was at this time that Prince Aulaffe first discovered the wonderful properties of the enchanted ring which his fairy godmother had placed on his finger whilst he was yet a babe, and which, as she foretold, had grown with his growth.

One day, after walking for some time to and fro in a remote and shady path, his inward perturbations urging him on in rapid strides till he was exhausted, he stopped suddenly on the brink of a flight of steps, and following their windings amongst the trees, reached a lovely miniature valley surrounded by a belt of lime and orange trees, and in the midst of which a fountain played ; here, sheltered from the hot sun, and yet cheered by its brightness as it played on the many-coloured spray of the fountain, and lighted the wings of the gorgeous butterflies which hung upon the lime



blossoms, he sank down to rest, and strove to forget in this fair retreat the 'one thought which was goading him to madness.

All at once his eye fell on the ring, and half dreaming, half awake, he beheld moving pictures on its surface. Scene after scene passed before his eyes; territories of other sovereigns, which he had heard of and longed to visit; cities which he knew so well by description that he had believed he could recognise their familiar streets as easily as the winding groves and alleys which he daily trode; islands in distant seas, the perfume of whose flowers he had fancied he could inhale; and forests whose dark mazes he had wandered through in imagination, and wherein he had in dreams pursued the strange wild creatures that inhabit their depths: all these were mirrored in the ring. At length on the surface of the pearl he beheld a sunset sky, whose melting tints of red and gold were fretted with tiny purple clouds, like wings of painted insects. Clear and sharp against the heavens stood out the marble ruins of an Eastern

temple. Rich luxuriant herbage studded with flowers clustered at its base, and hung like gay tapestry on the bosom of a gentle rise that sloped to the water's edge, where, motionless as the breathless scene, stood a white stork, with head bent down towards its own reflection in the water, on whose glassy tide was repeated the bright colouring of the western sky.

Breathless and enraptured, the Prince dared not stir lest the lovely scene should fade; but even as he watched it the glowing colours grew fainter, the moon slowly rose from behind the ruined temple, the tints of the flowers went out, the surface of the waters lost its blush of crimson and gold, and instead of the solitary stork, there stood on the brink of the waves a form clad in long wavy robes of white, with head bent down and clasped hands, in an attitude of mournful musing. Long hair of paly gold floated round the figure, but the face was invisible, and even as he strove with intense eagerness to realize the vision, it faded from his sight, and nothing but the smooth

pearl remained. But as he lifted up his eyes everything was changed. He had been there many hours ; the sun had set, and a gentle breeze swung the lime blossoms like sweet censurs to and fro ; the gay butterflies had folded their wings from the dew, and the rainbow had died from the fountain ; but a thousand tiny beings were playing with its spray, and diving in the jasper basin that caught it as it fell ; fairy fingers parted the tangled hair from his forehead, and fanned his hot brow with orange leaves. In and out of the flower-bells others chased the heavy-laden bees, and a multitude of shining forms floated in airy dances on the velvet sward, while she who seemed their queen reclined beneath the shadow of a gigantic mushroom, whose arched dome gleamed like silver in the moon-light.

“There is Prince Aulaffe,” said one of her fairy attendants.

“Happiest of mortals,” said another.

“Truly to be envied is he,” cried a third.

“Not so, ye foolish elves,” said the queen, and

Prince Aulaffe heard the words,—“Happy he once was, but his evil genius is gaining firmer hold on him day by day. Evil has entered into his spirit, and he knows it, but he yields himself its passive victim. To be envied! no; he is a madman conscious of his frenzy, but giving himself up to it body and soul. He is breaking his mother’s heart, destroying his father’s happiness, and bringing misery on the happiest home in all the King’s dominions.”

When the Prince heard this, he was conscience-stricken for a moment; but he thought of the vision of the ring, and it maddened him; his anger grew hot and impetuous, and he spoke aloud a vow, that he would have his will, that he would wander forth to see other lands, that he would seek the mysterious scene which the ring had shown him, and that no power should prevail to hold him back.

The sound of his voice echoed through the silent trees, and as he started from the ground, the fairy forms vanished into thin air, the fountain ceased to play, the moon drew back behind a cloud, and a damp, chilly dew fell on the lime and orange

bowers ; oppressed with a feeling of loneliness, and overshadowed with a strange fear, Prince Aulaffe sought the steps by which he had descended, and returned hastily to the palace.

As he drew near, lights shone from the windows, the grand reception-hall blazed with an hundred tapers, music resounded through the air, and groups of slaves and attendants, mingled with the soldiers of the royal guard, were crowding the great entrance, whose gates of fretted iron were rolled back as if to welcome some honoured guest.

“ Ah ! ” thought the Prince, as in distempered mood he approached the lighted hall, “ they can rejoice well enough without me ! What gala is this they are celebrating, when, for aught they know, my long day’s absence may have ended in a cruel death ? They have ceased to care for me—ceased to think my presence necessary to the success of a fête, or a fitting reception of strangers whom they wish to honour. It is well they have learnt the lesson so soon.”

As he passed by an angle of the building, where

a lighted window reaching to the ground betrayed through half-closed draperies the scene passing within, Prince Aulaffe beheld a sight that for a moment touched his heart with remorse. The Queen, his mother, reclined on a divan of cushions. She was dressed in the jewelled robes that became her rank, and was evidently about to take her part in the approaching festivities, whatever they might be; but her face was pale, and her sweet and tender eyes were full of tears; her hand rested in that of the King, who stood by her, also regally attired, but in an attitude of deep dejection; they seemed to be fortifying themselves in these few spare moments for the duties before them.

“Wretch that I am!” thought the Prince, “they are sorrowing for me. The fairy’s words were true, I have indeed brought misery to the happiest home that ever prince was born to.”

His first impulse was to leap through the open window, and throwing himself at their feet, promise never to leave them; but pride suffered him not; though softened, he was not repentant, and

drawing his figure to its full height, he turned round and entered the palace by a side-door.

"What means this turmoil, and what is the cause of it?" he asked of the sentinel who stood at his post.

"Oh ! my lord, have you indeed returned ?" began the soldier in joyful tones.


"Answer me, sirrah !" impatiently demanded the Prince. "What can my return signify to you, or to any one? Answer me."

"Two foreign ambassadors, one from the East, and one from the Land of Palms, arrive to-night, my lord," said the soldier thus rebuked, as he formally saluted the Prince, who, passing haughtily by, and avoiding the thoroughfare of the great hall, ascended to his apartments.

Late in the evening, as the Queen, oppressed with sad thoughts, was striving to appear at ease as she opened the ball with the ambassador from the East, she raised her eyes to seek for sympathy in the kind glances of the King her husband, and with unspeakable joy beheld him returning her anxious look

with one of radiant pleasure ; for, leaning on his arm, dressed in a dazzling suit of cloth of silver, and looking as once he used to do, was her lost son.

All that evening Prince Aulaffe devoted himself to his mother. Old times seemed to have come back again. Once more she trode the palace halls amidst her nobles and her ladies, proud of being their Queen, proud of her royal husband and her princely son, and dispensing with her own peculiar sweetness the graces of hospitality to the noble foreigners who had just arrived and moving amidst the flowers, and lights, and sweet music, as uniting the elements of each in herself. As he beheld the change, Prince Aulaffe's heart melted within him. He thought of the scene he had so lately witnessed, and of the difference his presence made ; from the King himself to the youngest courtier, all welcomed him with smiles and gladness ; and as he led the Queen, radiant with unwonted joy, to the door of her private apartments, and knelt to receive her blessing, his best feelings rose up, and it was only the language of his heart which spoke as he said—



“Mother, tell me never to leave you more, and I will obey you.”

But even as he said the words he started up ; he could not bear to hear her glad reply, but rushing down the nearest corridor, reached his own apartments, and dismissing his attendants, fastened the outer door, and flung himself on a couch by the open lattice to cool his fevered brow in the evening breeze.

Morning dawned, and its early light found Prince Aulaffe where the last moon-beams had left him. Sleep had but lately descended on his perturbed and restless spirit ; the night had been to him one long struggle between the good and evil in his heart. The sweet image of the Queen as he had seen her so lately, her looks of anxious solicitude, her delight in his presence, for the time prevailed ; and when he fell asleep he had said to himself, “I will not leave her ; she and my father shall be obeyed.” Yet, when the hum of insects and the breath of the fresh morning awoke him, his first exclamation was—

“Oh, to see the sun rise in other climes ; to waken to new scenes instead of this dull enclosed

spot ; to behold new faces ; to hear new tongues ; to be free ; to taste those pleasures, forbidden to me, but which the poorest in these realms may enjoy ; to live, and move, and breathe apart from this weary state, these monotonous diversions, these uncongenial companions !”

And again he let his mind wander unrestrained over those untried scenes. He glanced at his ring ; it was glittering in the morning light with pictures all sparkling with life. Cities thronged with living forms ; landscapes bathed in sunlight ; vast rivers, whereon floated pennoned barges and ships of many nations. It was too much ; he started up to pace his chamber floor, when remembering that he still wore the gay attire of the past night, he threw it impatiently from him, and summoned his attendants.

Two days after this Prince Aulaffe was walking in his usual excited way up and down one of the long dark alleys in the gardens, when he heard an approaching footstep. His first impulse was to hide himself, for he could ill brook the presence of a companion ; but before he could do so he beheld

advancing the tall slight form of the Eastern Ambassador, with whom he had lately held more converse than with any one in the palace.

This man was the Queen's particular aversion ; and at another time, when her opinion was Prince Aulaffe's key to the character of others, she would have warned her son to keep aloof from him, with an instinctive dread of his wily and subtle nature.


Dark-complexioned, and of a lithe and graceful form, which involuntarily suggested the writhings of a serpent, his features were eminently handsome ; but in his dark and sinister eyes there lurked a silent demon, which looked forth from the shadow of the long black lashes that usually veiled them as they glanced furtively around. He wore a white turban, which, while it hid in part his high narrow brow, added lustre to his eyes, and a deeper shade to his swarthy skin. His dress, a mass of gold and jewels, stood around him in stiff rich folds, like the burnished scales of some gorgeous beetle, and falling away from the arms, betrayed the delicate hands,

whose velvety touch gave no clue to the wondrous power and dexterity of their supple fingers.

With the natural antagonism of an open generous nature to one so dark and mysterious, Prince Aulaffe could never quite overcome the feeling which crept over him, like the shadowing of dark wings, whenever he came in contact with this foreigner ; but his conversation was so fluent, he had seen so much of the world, he spoke so eloquently on the one subject nearest the Prince's heart, that he insensibly insinuated himself into his confidence, and obtained a certain influence over him.

With a salaam so profound as to seem almost out of place in one of such high rank towards so young a man as Prince Aulaffe, the Ambassador joined him ; trying in vain to accommodate the quick, noiseless steps of his jewelled slippers, to the manly and energetic strides of the Prince.

For some moments neither spoke, until at length the Prince led the way to his favourite retreat, and flinging himself on the turf beneath the lime-trees, spoke thus—



"Have you seen my father? and have you prevailed?"

"I have seen the King, my Prince, and he shrank visibly from discussing the matter so near his heart, with one so unworthy to share his counsels." As he said this, a secret smile passed across the Ambassador's face, like a ripple over dark waters. "But when I pressed him, speaking of the King my master's known hospitality, the certainty of his cordial welcome, of the pride and pleasure he would confer on me by committing to my guardianship a Prince so accomplished as yourself; and when I offered to pledge my word for your sure return at the expiration of a year, he desired me to remember that I pleaded with a father to resign his only son; that he had weighty reasons for his refusal; that it must be spoken of in his presence no more; and that nothing could avail to extort his consent."

The wily Ambassador did not say how the King had besought him to use his influence with the Prince to dissuade him from his passionate wish

to travel, and how, with his subtle smile, he had promised to obey. He loved mischief for mischief's sake, and the prospect of creating disunion in this peaceful kingdom was most pleasant to his evil nature. All the influence, therefore, that he had with Prince Aulaffe, he threw into the opposite scale, and strove more and more to heighten his wish to travel, by descriptions, more or less true, but all glowing with the richness of his Oriental language.

As he lay on the grass, watching with his keen eyes the downcast countenance of the Prince, he noticed that his attention was fixed upon the ring on his left hand.

"What wondrous treasure have you there, my Prince? A pearl! and of priceless value. In the King my master's crown there is a pearl worth three kingdoms, but this is larger and fairer."

"Look at it," said the Prince. As he spoke, a city with minarets appeared upon the surface of the ring. Pale aspen trees shivered in the breath-

less burning air, as if they were cooled by invisible breezes from the far hills, and the scorching sun beat on the waters of a broad river where many barges moved slowly along, thronged with dusky forms clad in gay robes ; while in their midst sailed a small boat covered by an awning, the curtains of which were of a cloudy gauze, and through them the Prince beheld a recumbent form of exceeding beauty, clad in shining garments. The face was turned away, but long tresses of pale gold fell in bright luxuriance over the embroidered cushions, and the hand and arm that languidly waved a fan, made of the feathers of some tropic bird, were fair as alabaster.

“What !” cried the Ambassador starting to his feet, with an energy strangely at variance with his usual tranquillity of motion ; “What magic is this ?” my own native city ; the festival of the golden idols ; (alas ! that I am absent !) the royal barge with the twelve one-eyed rowers ; and the princess—” He suddenly stopped.

“Speak !” cried the impetuous Prince. “Tell me

who and what she is, or I will strike your turbaned head from its swarthy resting place !”

“My Prince,” said the Ambassador, resuming in a moment his former suavity of demeanour; “my Prince, you forget your own rank and mine. Be calm. Nay, I pardon you; we are alone, and I can excuse the excitability of youth.”

“I spoke hastily, my lord,” said the Prince, extending his hand as his generous nature prompted him; “some evil demon possesses me, I think;” and here he passed his hand over his brow like one oppressed with sad recollections. “But now have pity on my impatience, and tell me, is that indeed your native city? and who is the mysterious being who floats like a water-lily on that golden river? I have seen her before now; tell me who and what she is.”

“Seen her! How, and where?” exclaimed the Ambassador in a voice like the echoes of distant thunder.

“I have seen her in a vision, in this ring, in my dreams; I have seen her on a solitary island, by the ruins of a marble temple;—she is my fate,

my destiny—I know it, and I will seek her to the end of the world.”

“Rash and impetuous fool,” said the low tones of the Ambassador ; but Prince Aulaffe neither heard them, nor saw the scowl of hatred that darkened his features.

“You know her, my lord,” continued the Prince, “tell me her name, her dwelling-place and—”

“Rest you content, my Prince, and calm yourself,” said the Ambassador, now smiling as the sun sometimes smiles while the tempest is rumbling in the distance. “This is all I know ;” (but it was not, for he knew all the strange history of the orphan Princess Mesta ;) “in the picture we saw but now, the king of my country was going in state to be present at the greatest festival of the year, for the Golden Idols are greater than the Silver ones, and may only be approached once, and that with rich offerings which are laid before them by a maiden of royal birth. The Princess Mesta performs this office in right of her exalted rank, and she is looked upon as an inspired priestess by the

multitude, who regard her with superstitious reverence. I have never seen her face," which was untrue, because he had often seen the Princess, whom he delighted to persecute; "and she lives by her own choice away from court, on an island in the tropic seas;" which was likewise untrue, for he had himself persuaded the king her uncle to immure her there against her will, because she was the the rightful heir to the throne; and there she pined in solitude, knowing no way of escape, and was only allowed to come into the world once a year, to minister to the golden idols.

"Then," said the Prince, "if I do accompany you on your return, you can take me to your beautiful city, where, at least at a distance, I may behold this peerless maiden."

"Not only that," replied the wicked Ambassador, more than ever desirous to get the Prince into his own power, "but it may be that I shall prevail with the King to let you see her, on certain conditions. Besides, putting the Princess Mesta out of the question, look at your ring; watch its

wondrous changes. I know the stately arches of that noble bridge; I have bent with Christians at the golden shrines of that grand cathedral; I have basked at noon in the sunshine of those smiling plains, beneath the shadow of the mountains where perpetual snow reigns. And see, my Prince, the stately vessels in yonder harbour! I would we were there! I know it well; and all these glorious scenes I must pass through as I return to my native land."

"Avaunt, and tempt me not," groaned the Prince, as that something which every human being has within him, made one last effort to recall him to his duty.

"But," said the wily Ambassador, "your decision must be speedy, as I leave your father's court to-morrow."

"To-morrow! so soon!" exclaimed the Prince.

"Yes, to-morrow; and your presence will not be unexpected at my master's court, for some days ago I despatched a courier to announce my return, and to give time for due preparation on the approach of an illustrious guest."

The sensitive spirit of Prince Aulaffe had well nigh taken fire at this quiet settling of his fate ; it was as though the Ambassador had foreseen, through all their vehement struggles, which spirit would gain the mastery over him ; but he said nothing, and the day passed idly by as they reclined beneath the trees ; the Ambassador rivetting his victim's chains, and watching very enviously the fleeting pictures on the enchanted ring.

Once he tried to prevail on Prince Aulaffe to part with it, and offered him in exchange a sapphire, which he wore in the front of his turban, and which from its size and colour was called the " Moonlight Sea ;" but the Prince told him how it was the gift of a fairy at his birth, and that it never had left his finger, and by his own consent never should.

That night, as the Queen sat alone in her apartment before retiring to rest, a low knock fell on the outer-door, and before she could speak, Prince Aulaffe knelt at her feet. " Mother," he said, " the heavenly powers forgive me, but I must leave you. The shadow of my destiny is upon me, and what

can resist it? I would not leave you secretly, for I could not bear to go without your blessing, mother."

But a change came over the Queen. No longer feeble, sorrowing, and in tears, she rose, and drawing her figure to its full height, said,—

"My son,"—and whilst she spoke, the King entered and stood by her ;—"My son, so long as you sought our consent to your mad wishes, your father and I, knowing the misery you will fall into, refused it ; but you are of age, and we are no stern tyrants to wish to force your obedience ; go then. Until this unhappy mania seized you, you were ever the best and most dutiful of sons—" here her voice failed, and the King spoke the rest, for they were ever one in thought, and he knew what she wished to say—"Kneel down, Aulaffe, your mother and I bless you, as you were to us in those past days, and may all good powers protect you, my son. At the end of a year return to us ; if we are living we shall welcome you home ; if not, these dominions are yours, rule them as we have

done for the good of your people, and the blessings of a prosperous reign shall be yours. Farewell."

And leading Prince Aulaffe to the door, the King closed it behind him.

For a moment the Prince sank down in utter grief, for he loved his parents, and at that instant would have given worlds to return to them. Nay, he might yet have done so, but he beheld the Eastern Ambassador approaching on his way to his sleeping chamber, attended by two slaves bearing lights. He could not bear to meet his searching glance, so stifling his agony of mind, he rose with a firm step and went to his apartments.

The next morning, before the sun had dried the dew, Prince Aulaffe had set forth on his travels in the train of the Eastern Ambassador. For some days they still continued travelling through the extensive dominions of the King, and during that time nothing could exceed the deferential courtesy of the Ambassador towards Prince Aulaffe. But no sooner did they step on foreign ground, than his demeanour underwent a total change. Prone

to take offence, he would sometimes separate himself from the Prince for days. Often and again he tried by persuasion and by stratagem to gain possession of the enchanted ring. When he found both methods fail, nothing would so easily enrage him as any allusion to the coveted object. The change of scene, the novelty and bustle of each day, prevented Prince Aulaffe from noticing, or being grieved by this strange conduct. But the Ambassador now began to manifest the greatest personal dislike to him, and treated him in the most irritating and contemptuous manner; until at length the high spirit of the Prince could bear it no longer, and in great wrath, he one evening declared before the whole suite of the Ambassador, that he would report his unprincely conduct to the King his master, so soon as they should reach his court.

When the Ambassador heard this, he sprang from the cushions whereon he reclined smoking his nargileh, and drawing from his side the sharp scimitar which he always wore, would have ended the life of Prince Aulaffe on the spot; but that

one of the attendants arrested his arm, and with a smile of deadly hatred he restored it to its sheath, saying, "We shall see!"

The same night Prince Aulaffé's ring was stolen from him. His wine had been drugged, and he being supposed to be dead, was left fastened into his apartment. When he awoke it was past mid-day. Still heavy and drowsy from the effect of the potion, he soon suspected the danger he had been in, and by dint of great exertion succeeded in breaking open the door in order to summon the two attendants who had accompanied him from home, and on whose fidelity he could rely; but to his unspeakable horror he discovered them both cold and dead outside his door; having doubtless been murdered by the wicked Ambassador, who with his train had disappeared in the middle of the night.


His anger was great, but there was none to heed it; his desolate state there was none to pity: he who had once but to wish and an hundred slaves sprang to his call, was now alone in the world. He had been brought up in the lap of luxury; a

thousand things were necessary to him, which to others would be superfluities. His valuable jewels had been stolen, his changes of fine linen and attire, his ivory carved mirrors, and all the appliances of the toilette ; but all these were as nothing lost compared with the dreadful feeling of loneliness, the conviction that he had not a friend. He thought of his forsaken home with bitter tears, but repentance came too late, and he must now set forth on his solitary journey, whither he knew not.

Many days and nights he wandered alone through trackless forests, and across solitary plains, sustaining life as best he might. What were his beauty, his accomplishments, and his wondrous mental gifts now ? A common peasant of nature's own teaching would have fared better ; and but for the excellence in athletic sports which had given vigour to his frame, he must have sunk under the fatigues and privations of this wandering life.

But it was now that the golden qualities of Prince Aulaff's true nature, refined and purified, shone forth in trouble. In all his sufferings, augmented

as they were to him by their sharp contrast with his former life, he never allowed himself to repine. All that he had done and said in the last madness and wrong of his estrangement from his parents, rose like accusing spirits from the depths of his sad heart ; but he would not yield despairingly to the misery of these recollections ;—only he resolved to bear the present as a righteous requital of the past, and to trust hopefully in the future. Many were the generous, kindly deeds he did as he wandered along. Once he found in a forest a poor stag, which had broken his leg, and lay gasping in pain beneath a spreading sycamore, from whence, as he approached, it cast its large tear-gemmed eyes towards him, imploring aid. With tender hands he bound it up, and watched it until it could rise and join its companions. Once he saved the life of a little child, which playing upon the brink of a river had fallen in and was drowning. Once he entered into a cottage where a poor woman, forsaken of her kind, lay dying of thirst in a burning fever. For three days he tended her like a son, and when



as she recovered and no longer needed his aid, he left her, he took the golden clasp that held together the remnants of his thread-bare mantle, and left it in her hand to buy the sustenance she required. And with many other good actions did he lighten the loneliness of the way, and kept alive in his heart the tender charities of life; learning daily that most sacred lesson of misfortune,—sympathy with the joys and the sorrows of others.

But his sufferings were not yet over. He entered towards sunset one evening an immense forest. Many days he wandered about in it: finding no end to its leafy mazes, and almost hopeless of ever reaching its outskirts, he began to resign himself to death.


“It can but come once,” he thought, as fatigued by the burning heat he threw himself on a moss-grown bank beneath a large tree. “It will soon be over too, for I am weak and worn. Perhaps, for I am sore wearied, I shall sleep myself into death; and now it seems the bitterness is past, for I cannot remember anything but my father

and my mother blessing me. Peaceful remembrance! the comfort of my sorrowful wanderings. Now, I can only think of meeting them in another world, where the wish to leave them shall never enter. There, too, I may see the beautiful and mysterious being, to win whose regard has mingled in my soul with the hope of their forgiveness! Then let death come when it lists; the quicker the more welcome: if I shall meet them there, what have I else to live for?" And he slept.

From this state he was aroused by rough hands which seized him, and he opened his eyes to behold, staring and grinning around, the dark faces of savages pressing one upon the other to look at him.

Sleep had refreshed and given him something of his own energy and strength, and he started up to defend himself. Then he fled from them hoping to hide securely in the mazes of the forest; but with shrieks and shouts they let him run a little way, and then pursued and brought him back.

Gesticulating and chattering in their unknown tongue, they robbed him of the few remaining clasps



which fastened his worn attire, and which were of wrought gold, and with all kinds of minute torments they tried to irritate and madden him, until at length one who seemed their chief, advanced, and silence fell amongst them. Sitting on the ground before the captive Prince, and surrounded by several of the oldest men, he appeared to consult with them in turn what should be done.

One, by his gestures, seemed to advocate burning the prisoner alive; another, hanging him to the nearest tree; and each made their suggestions, gesticulating so as to make it very transparent to the unhappy Prince what was in store for him, until it came to the last. He was a very old man, his beard was white with the snow of age; he said a few words in a clear deliberate tone, which seemed to win universal approval, as the multitude who stood around manifested the wildest delight, dancing, shrieking, and running to and fro in every direction.


His fate, whatever it was, being settled, Prince Aulaffe, knowing how useless would be any attempt at resistance, prepared with outward calmness to

meet it, being determined to suffer as became his noble birth and brave ancestry.

Through the forest his savage captors dragged him with ruthless speed, until he found himself at length on the wide shores of the Indian Ocean. Then some of them, rushing to the beach, drew from a neighbouring cave a canoe, into which they threw a little bag of Indian corn, a few cocoa nuts, and a flask of water, and lifting Prince Aulaffe as easily as they would a child, tossed him into the canoe, and paddling into the sea, the tide being now on the ebb, they pushed it afloat, cheered by the exclamations of their comrades on the shore.

Thus they sacrificed Prince Aulaffe as a propitiatory offering to their water-god, fierce and terrible storms having lately visited those coasts, and injured their fishing trade.

Launched on the wide sea the unfortunate Prince floated on. Water on the right, on the left, and beneath him; the burning sun above; so little to keep body and soul together, and he bound for unknown shores, whithersoever the wind might carry




him. He glanced below at the deep waters ; there he beheld strange sights as the boat sailed further out to sea ; wonderful shapes, such as he had never seen, were passing to and fro ; fish on glistening fins, bright as the wings of tropic birds ; floating tendrils from delicate plants ; sea flowers of fragile texture ; strange rolling bounding creatures frolicking in the water ;—what if he should be flung down amongst them by the rising waves ? Then he glanced up to the meridian sky blazing like molten brass, whose fiery heat was beating down upon his unsheltered frame. Thirst, maddening thirst fell upon him, but he dared not yield unrestrained to the impulse, lest his supply of water should fail him. If he should have strength to endure through this day, what would to-morrow bring ? He had welcomed death in the cool and shady forest, when it seemed to approach him in the guise of sleep. But this was death in a form so terrible, and life in suffering so cruel, that he knew not which the most to dread. Three fearful hours went by, and still the little boat was slowly lifted on from wave to wave ; when

a breeze, faint and feeble, but to him like the fanning of angels' wings, crept slowly by, and oh! blessed thought! it was surely perfumed by the breath of those spices which grow on tropic shores.

How long, or in which direction he floated onwards, he never knew; but he revived to find the canoe beating with her keel on the pebbly strand of a small bay, close to whose margin sloped soft green turf, fringed with tall palms; trees covered with blossom and fruit together, the spangled cedar and the graceful sweeping ilex, to whose branches clung delicate creeping plants.

The grey twilight was fast brightening beneath the rising moon, and the glancing of innumerable fire-flies lit the air with stars.

Refreshed, and beyond measure thankful for this unexpected deliverance, after fastening the canoe to the branch of a tree which overhung the water, Prince Aulaffe, still true to his inherent love of adventure, set forth to walk round the island. For some time he could think of nothing but its extreme beauty, its wealth of foliage, and the belt of sea,



which, like a living sapphire, girt it round. At length a confused remembrance dawned upon him, his heart beat with undefinable anticipations, and as he turned round the base of a high jutting bank, he beheld a scene he recognised too well.

A ruined temple, whose marble walls gleamed in the moonlight, stood on a slight elevation, from whence to the sea descended a green and flowery carpet of rich herbage. On the left hand, the western heavens were yet flushed with the red and amber glow of sunset, and on the solitary beach, with drooping head, round which the long fair tresses fell waving to the hem of her tunic, stood a white-robed form; the maiden whom he had seen in his dreams. Could it indeed be reality? was it not rather some vision of a brain disordered by weakness and suffering?—was he himself alive? or was this some other sphere, whither his spirit had fled from the tossed and way-worn frame, still floating, perchance, on the wide un pitying sea?

Whilst he stood hesitating and incredulous, the maiden turned as if to depart, when fearing to lose

her for ever, the Prince sprang forward, and kneeling at her feet, implored her forgiveness of his intrusion.

"Forgive you!" she said, with a bewildered look, "who and what are you, that dare venture here? Methought the ship was not afloat, nor the sails unfurled, that would dare to coast these shores! Yet," she murmured, "it was foretold otherwise."

"Stay, stay and hear me, Princess Mesta!" said the Prince; and seeing her look of surprise as he spoke her name, he told her how and where he had seen her; of all that had befallen him since he had left his home to seek her; of the loss of his ring; and how, at length, believing he should never see her in this world, he had courted death, trusting to meet her in another.

"Ah!" said the Princess, "I was told, years ago, when first I came here a helpless child, that my deliverance should come from the western seas, and therefore have I watched on this shore ever since, at twilight, though in truth I thought it but an idle dream."

Then she told him the history of her life; that,

being born the heiress of a wealthy kingdom, the King, her uncle, having no children, was in consequence in perpetual dread of her claims to the crown, and would long ago have murdered her, but that her office as priestess of the Golden Idols gave her sanctity in the eyes of the people, who looked upon her as their future queen, and who would have rebelled instantly should any harm befall her.

As they were conversing thus, they heard across the water the measured dip and splash of oars ; the Princess started to her feet.

“Go !” she said, “hide in this cave, for I hear approaching my greatest enemy, the chief councillor of the King my uncle ; I am obliged to receive him, and I will grant him an audience here to-night. But go, you will die if he finds you here, and then what will become of me !”

“One moment, dear Princess,” said Prince Aulaffe. “You say this man is your enemy ; he is mine too ; but what of the attendants ? are they his or yours ?”

“They are the twelve one-eyed rowers of the royal barge,” answered the Princess ; “they volunteer

to row him here, because they are my slaves, and believe me to be inspired ; and that to be permitted to touch the turf of my island brings them good luck ; the rest of the attendants are devoted to me as their future queen, and but for their fidelity I had not been living now. But there is no time to lose ; hasten, they are about to land."

Prince Aulaffe hid himself in the mouth of the cave, from whence he could not only see, but hear all that passed ; and the hot blood rushed through every vein as he beheld the slight and graceful form of the Eastern Ambassador, his jewelled attire glistening in the moonlight, and the turban resting on his swarthy brow, like snow on a dark mountain. Supported by two slaves, he placed his foot delicately on the shining beach, and approaching the Princess with a profound reverence, knelt with arms folded upon his breast and downcast eyes, about two paces from her, when having touched the ground with his forehead, he arose and stood before her, as if waiting till she should invite him to speak.

Seated upon a moss-covered bank, her whole attitude instinct with dignity, and her beautiful face calm and placid as the light which fell upon her, she addressed him thus:—


“Merab, chief of the nobles of the East, how is it that thou hast dared to disobey me, and to come hither before the appointed time?”

“Most sacred priestess of the Golden Idols,” said he, and the old dark smile gleamed across his features, “I had not dared to approach thee, but that matters touching the service of the gods, and the welfare of the kingdom, forced me to waive ceremony for this once; I pray you pardon me, and hear my words. Slaves!” he added aloud to the attendants, who were kneeling around in reverence of their priestess, “retire out of hearing.” And, as they retreated, he approached nearer to the Princess, and throwing off the deferential manner he knew so well how to assume, he said:—

“And now, my queen, hearken, and instead of looking scornfully on your devoted slave, listen to the best constructed plot that ever bore golden fruit.

The King, your uncle, is so weary of the anxiety your existence causes him, that he is resolved to murder you, and did this day disclose to me his intention.

“Now I have often before pressed you to be my bride ; once more, and for the last time, I offer you my hand, and in token of my affection accept this ring ;” and before she could reply, he placed on her finger Prince Aulaffe’s ring, explaining to her its magic properties. “What I propose, then, is this, that I should return home from this interview, execute vengeance on the King, your uncle, and to-morrow, instead of coming as he has commanded me, to have you secretly put to death, I will return, and bear you in triumph as my bride, to take possession of your rightful dominions. You will be received with acclamations by the people, who adore you, as much as I have taught them to despise the King. Then shall we reign together in undisturbed felicity ; you will be free, and I, long since thy slave, will be thy protector, thy deliverer, and thy servant still.”



So saying, he knelt down to take her hand, when a voice behind him cried, "We shall see!" The Princess shrieked and fled, as a blow from a knotted club in the hands of Prince Aulaffe, stretched him on the ground, where the Prince beheaded him with his own sharp scimitar.


On hearing the shrieks of the Princess, the rowers and attendants crowded instantly to the spot, prompt to avenge, and ready to protect her. Seeing their master stretched headless and bleeding on the ground, and Prince Aulaffe standing by, evidently having done the deed, they could not understand what was going to happen; when, waving his hand for silence, the Prince related to them in their own language, how he had slain the treacherous and wicked Merab, to save the life of their King, and to protect their beloved Princess.

It happened that among their number was one who had travelled in the Ambassador's suite, and who knew Prince Aulaffe, and that he spoke truly; he, therefore, knelt down and saluted him by his rightful titles; and following his example, the rest

swore fealty to the Prince and vowed to serve him, imploring him to search for their Princess, and to conduct her to her uncle's court, whom they declared to be a weak but not evil-natured king, and who, now that the ruling spirit of tyranny and mischief was removed, would be easily prevailed upon to do justice to his brother's child, and, perhaps to restore her to her father's rights.

With this good intelligence, Prince Aulaffe turned to seek the Princess, directing that, in the meantime, the barges should be prepared, and assenting to the prayer of the twelve one-eyed rowers, to be permitted to conduct her across the water.

He wandered about for some time, making the groves re-echo with his voice, until, as he was passing through the ruins of the temple to seek her again on the shore, his foot tripped against a large stone, which being thus dislodged, betrayed an aperture, in whose dark mouth feebly glimmered the light of a silver lamp, whereby he discovered a flight of steps. Without hesitating, he dashed down into the depths below, and groping his way



in dark corridors, came suddenly upon a blaze of light so dazzling, that for a moment he could see nothing. By and by his eyes became accustomed to the glare, and he beheld, in the farthest corner of the apartment, stretched lifeless on a couch, the object of his search. Her pallid cheek and closed eyes wore the aspect of death, and for a moment he thought that the punishment of his sin was not yet over, and that, on the brink of happiness, his treasure had been snatched from him. But seizing a jewelled flask of rich essence which stood by, he bathed her face and hands, and with many endearing words called her back to life. Slowly she unclosed her eyes, and beheld, kneeling by her, him who in the confusion and uncertain light she had believed lay slain upon the sea-shore. It was long before she recovered, so great had been the shock, and so deadly her fear of the traitor Merab, who she believed would pursue, and put her to a cruel death.

At length Prince Aulaff's care and her own resolution enabled her to rise, and wrapping a large

mantle around her, she gave into the Prince's hands her casket of jewels, and some money which she begged him to distribute amongst the attendants as he might see right ; and then, taking from her own hand the enchanted ring, she said,—


“ Take it, Prince ; to me it must ever recall painful memories, and its wondrous powers are not endeared to me by association, as they are to you.”

“ Endeared to me, truly,” replied the Prince, “ for in this I first beheld you, my Princess.”

As they thus spoke, quitting the ruins of the temple they came full into the moonlight, and beheld their little band of followers eagerly awaiting their approach.

Then Prince Aulaffe handed the beautiful Princess into her barge, and the twelve one-eyed rowers placed themselves at the oars. The sea was calm and placid, the air filled with odoriferous perfumes from the island, and the sky glittering with countless stars.

There was a long path of glory left by the moonbeams upon the water, reaching into the far distance,



and at the end of it heaven and earth seemed to meet and blend together.

“May our life be as calm, and our path to a glorious end as full of light and happiness!” said the Prince; “and now that we have found each other, we will never be separated more. Immediately we will set forward and journey towards my home, whither I am impatient to return.”

As he spoke he involuntarily glanced at his ring. It showed him the well-known chamber where he had so often sat at his mother’s feet, learning those lessons which in his worst moods became his accusing angels; where he had last seen his parents and received their blessing. The King and Queen were entering together, both were grown old and care-worn. The Queen’s face especially wore that look of sorrow which does not seek relief in tears. Both were attired in robes of deep mourning, and in the King’s hand was a letter written in the Oriental characters, and sealed with a waxen seal, to which was appended by silken strings a small ruby, the emblem of truth.

Though he could not decipher the scroll, Prince Aulaffé's heart sank within him, as it flashed across his mind that this was the work of the Ambassador Merab, who had, doubtless, with some plausible tale, deceived his unhappy parents.

Fearing to sadden her gentle spirit, and half doubting if she could enter into his grief, he looked at the Princess, but her eyes were raised to his and filled with tears; with an intuitive perception she had divined all, and now, impatient as himself, she proposed to turn their course at once in the direction of his father's kingdom.

To this, however, the Prince would not consent; and just as the first rays of morning blushed on the topmost minarets of her native city, the barge reached its moorings before the palace gates, and the Princess Mesta was borne through the entrance in a litter, on the shoulders of the slaves.

It was so early, that the King had not yet risen, and could not credit the tidings which an hundred officious menials brought, of the arrival of the Princess. But on the appearance of a messenger

whom she had despatched to entreat an immediate interview, he gave orders that she should be instantly admitted into the Hall of Peacocks, a splendid apartment overlooking the river, where audiences were usually granted, and which was hung round by tapestry covered with peacocks' feathers.


As soon as the King appeared, and had received the Princess with the formal courtesy which it was his wont to pay to her high rank and sacred office, he beckoned to the attendants to retire, and expressed his anxiety to hear the incidents of the strange story which had in part reached him.

In grave silence he listened throughout, and when he had learnt the just punishment of the wicked Ambassador, and by whom it had been inflicted, desired a slave to bring into his presence the stranger Prince.

With a respectful obeisance, Prince Aulaffe approached the King, who, with an Oriental's love of story-telling, demanded an instant relation of his adventures, and having heard him in silence to the end, said :—

“Prince, I have been taught to believe you dead, that you had been killed by the stumbling of your horse, which cast you over a precipice ; and I have mourned for you as the son of mine old and faithful ally. Learn wisdom by my experience ; let no minister, however wise, rule either yourself or your kingdom. It is the curse of kings to be surrounded by false friends, more to be dreaded than open enemies. Through the machinations of that wicked man, I have been cruel and unjust to the only representative of our ancient line, whom I now believe to be as innocent of the rebellious intrigues whereof she was accused to me, as I myself. But it is not too late to make reparation.”

“Hear me, gracious sovereign,” said the Prince. “I have long loved, and have now won the consent of the Princess Mesta to be my wife. I am the heir to a kingdom whose wealth and importance your highness knows well ; my inheritance is sufficient for our ambition ; keep then these rich territories, we shall never disturb your tranquillity by a wish to share them.



“We have one request to proffer; I am a wanderer from my father’s house, without money and without friends; I am eager to return to my sorrowing family; if, then, you desire to serve us, you will suffer us to be conducted, by trusty guides, to the borders of my father’s kingdom.”

This proposal seeming good in the eyes of the King, he promised to further their desires, and to give the Princess Mesta away in marriage, himself, as soon after sunset as the city should be at rest; after which, they were to depart immediately on their journey with as much secrecy as might be, lest the people, being apprized of it, should refuse to allow their sacred priestess to leave the city. Accordingly, at the appointed hour the King approached, bearing in one hand a casket of pearls and rubies of inestimable value, set in the red gold of India; and in the other, all the sacred ornaments studded with precious gems, in which she had been wont to officiate before the Golden Idols.

These he gave as a marriage dower to the Princess,

with twelve thousand sequins, five of the costly shawls of Cashmere, and others embroidered in gold and silver. He also presented Prince Aulaffe with ten Arabian horses, and a white state elephant with trappings of gold, besides other kingly gifts.

So soon, therefore, as the marriage ceremony was concluded, and the Princess had taken leave of her uncle, she and the prince were conducted by a secret stair to the place of embarkation, and immediately the vessels set sail, bearing the Princess Mesta and her royal husband towards his native land.

No adventures befell them by the way, and in thirteen days they approached within a few hours' distance of the palace, when the Prince, fearing lest their sudden arrival should prove too agitating for the Queen his mother, sent express messengers forward to announce it.

Loud were the rejoicings, and magnificent the fêtes which were held throughout the kingdom, to welcome back the lost Prince and his lovely bride; and costly were the offerings which the wealthy nobles brought to their future queen.

But though they valued these kindly demonstrations, and graciously acknowledged them, the Prince and Princess rejoiced most in the tender welcome of their father and mother.

To the Princess these ties were new, but not even the prince himself clung to them with more devoted affection, and the King and Queen were wont to say, they had lost one child to gain two.

Happy were the early morning hours, when, before state affairs or the duties of representation called them to separate, the King and Queen were wont to sit with their son and daughter, unrestrained by the presence of others, in the retirement of the Queen's apartment.

One morning they were listening as they were wont to the endless adventures each had to recount, the Queen and Princess at their large tapestry frames seated by the open casement, when they suddenly became aware of the presence of the Fairy who had presided at Prince Aulaffe's birth.

Fixing her calm observant eyes on the countenance of the Prince, she spoke thus :—

"In the past, my godson, lies the priceless treasure of experience. Be wise, and disdain not to test the future by it.

"My gift has been one fraught with momentous destinies for you ; trouble and sorrow have passed over you ; let not these have been in vain.

"I will not reproach you with the past ; but, lest you should again be misled by the properties of your magic ring, I will change their nature."

So saying, the fairy passed her wand over the surface of the pearl, on which there immediately appeared engraven the word, *Truth*.

"See," she continued, "whenever you are in anxiety or doubt, these letters will arrange themselves into some word which will dissolve your perplexities, and give you a clue to the action most righteous and most wise. Consult it then, without fear, and with a pure trusting heart, and you need never doubt its decision, for it will be to you in all things "TRUTH."

And ere the Prince could reply, she had vanished.

In the annals of that kingdom, the reign of Prince

Aulaffe and his good and beautiful Queen, is written in letters emblazoned with gold; and none fairer or brighter is to be found in the history of kingdoms.

And sealed in a jewelled casket, which no mortal hand has the power to open, preserved in the royal treasury, and revered by succeeding generations, lies the ring, in whose setting is contained The Enchanted Pearl.

VIOLA.



VIOLA.

ONCE, long ago, there was an old castle, which stood above the banks of a beautiful river, whose waters ran on about half a mile further, and then fell into the sea.

The castle was inhabited by a knight, who was renowned, far and near, for his bravery in battle and his fidelity to his king ; while the hospitality which he and his young wife so nobly dispensed, caused them to be beloved by all the country round.

They had one only child, a daughter, whom they dearly loved, and who was their constant companion, until she was about four years old.

At this time the king, who delighted in feats of arms, sent word to his faithful knight, that he was

going to hold a tournament, a few miles from the castle, and that he should arrive late in the evening, rest there that night, and on the morrow proceed onward to the lists.

There was great bustle and preparation in the castle at this announcement, and for once the little Viola was left to the care of her nurse, a worthless woman, who only thought of her own comfort and ease, and not at all of her sweet little charge.

The last injunction which the Lady Hildegunda gave, as she parted from her child, was,—

“Gretchen, take the babe into the pleasaunce, and show her the bright flowers in the terrace gardens; but on no account take her near the river. I would send a man-at-arms to attend you, but——”

“Madam, the care of the Lady Viola is no light task, she is not easy to prevail with; I pray you, let Sigismund of the Halbert follow us at a distance in case of need, I would fain not be alone with so responsible a charge.”

This she said because she loved Sigismund, though her lady knew it not.

"Be it so ;" said the Lady Hildegunda, "and fare thee well, darling of my heart!" she cried, embracing her little fairy child, and as she retired, looking back again and again, to tempt the little one's sunny smile.

Anon Sigismund of the Halberd approached. He and the false Gretchen soon became engrossed in conversation, and wandered down terrace after terrace, until they came to the river's side. Now there were tall bulrushes and water-flags growing on the bank, and the little Lady Viola, stretching out to reach them, lost her balance, and had well-nigh fallen into the water ; whereupon, Gretchen seized her with rough hands, in anger at being thus startled into remembering her disobedience, and whilst little frail Viola, unused to such cruel handling, stood frightened and in pain, the wicked Gretchen said,

"I'll call the water-fairies to fetch thee : I would that they might carry thee away, and drown thee in the cold river !"

Scarcely had she said these words, when the

waters of the river suddenly rose higher and higher, the sky grew dark and angry, and out of the black, tumbling, surging waves rose the strange forms of the water-kelpies.

They seized her as she stood paralyzed with horror, and smothering her among the rushes, held her down under the water till she was drowned. There they left her, and she was found when the river went down.

In the meantime, the little Viola felt herself lifted up tenderly, and carried far below into the waters ; sailing on in a dreamy sleep, until at last she opened her eyes, and found herself in a beautiful grotto made of yellow marble, whereof the steps led down into the depths of the sea. Reclining upon these steps, and moving around her on the marble floor, were the graceful sea-maidens who had brought her there.

Some were binding their long hair with wreaths of pearls ; others twining garlands of sea-flowers, or stringing bracelets of the amber and red cornelian, which every tiny wave brought sparkling to their

feet, as if it knew how they loved to play with such bright toys ; others were wondering over Viola's childish loveliness, and asking questions of their sisters, how and where she was found.

“ Ah ! beautiful little mortal child ! ” they said, “ we will keep you with us ; you shall wander with us amongst our fields of red and purple, more lovely far than your own green lawns. You shall learn our language ; we will teach you to love what we love, and to be happy here. You must forget your home, and live with us for ever.”

At this moment, trumpet notes were heard, and the sound of floating harps, and sweet unearthly voices. The Queen of these regions approached. She was seated on a sea-horse, whose white mane was like the froth of the sea ; many water-nymphs surrounded her, whose music had announced her approach, and a thousand strange creatures, the inhabitants of the deep, gambolled and frolicked around her.

So soon as she had seated herself on the crystal couch, that was placed beneath a canopy woven of

sea-flowers at the upper end of the hall, the Queen desired that little Viola should be brought to her.

“My maidens,” she said, in a sweet, clear voice; “ye have undertaken a weighty charge. I will, however, consent to this babe’s remaining with us twelve years; but she must be brought up under my own care, and my orders regarding her strictly obeyed. Anemone, my child, listen;—she must never hear evil spoken of the inhabitants of earth, for they are akin to her, to them she may return, and she must be taught rather to love, than to fear them,” said the Queen, addressing one of her maidens; who, thereupon, drooped her head and looked ashamed, for she hated the people of earth, having been once frightened and disturbed, as she was playing too near the shore.

“Coralline, to you I entrust the guardianship of this lovely mortal child. Teach her to swim and dive with your own peculiar grace; teach her the names and habits of the creatures of my dominions. Take her to the homes of my nautilus messengers, and let her hear from them what strange things

they behold in foreign seas, the blue Mediterranean, or those distant oceans whose sands are gold, and whose waters cover treasures richer than earthly mines can give. Show her the grotto of pearls and coral which my workers are building for me ; and let her learn from you and Sepiola, how to twine the green and purple tapestry, wherewith we shall deck its walls. Show her my favourite flowers, the gorgeous beds of crimson and yellow, where the silvery fern-plants grow between ; the far-stretching fields of blue and violet, where my tiny fish swim to and fro, on fins bright as the wings of tropic birds. Take her where the many-tinted shells are found, deep down where no storm ever reaches though we hear the great waves thundering over-head.

To you, Ulva, I commit the babe when I go forth at night ; when the dark waters are alive with glittering stars, when the distant fields lie sparkling, and the long green banners of the sea-plants stream with light. And lest she should be afraid when we meet the round shining moon-fish, or tremble at the sight of our illuminated palaces, and the

sounds of our rejoicing subjects, Doris and Lorea shall attend her too. See that she lacks nothing ; prepare for her fitting robes ; bind her golden locks with coral stems ; and let her join us in all our expeditions, that she may learn how we rule our subjects, and how in all things we strive to make them happy.

And now to you, Pearl, I entrust this little one, that you may teach her one thing, in which above all my maidens you excel. Teach her, my child, to love those errands of mercy which you yourself delight in. Take her to the great palace of green marble where my grandfather dwelt. Show her how we bind the bruised fins of the poor little fish who have been injured by the rocks, or rescued from their enemies ; the tender shells that we repair, when their hinges are broken in the storms, or those with the spiral points, or the taper feelers, which we restore. Then tell her how we rock to sleep the mortals who are drowned in our element. How we lay them to rest in the loveliest beds of sea-plants. How we chaunt over them, sweet and

mournful harmonies. How we weave for them close-fitting shrouds of the finest tendrils of our ferns, so that nothing can molest them; and how at night, when all else is radiant and light as day, their silent resting place is held sacred, and not a sea-star ventures there."

At first little Viola wept, for she remembered her sweet mother's face, but soon she learned to love the sea-nymphs and their Queen, and became like one of them.

In the mornings, when the sun's rays pierced through the crystal water, and fell upon the steps of yellow marble, and into the bright hall of the palace, Coralline and Sepiola, seating themselves on either side of her, taught the child to weave the beautiful green and purple tapestry destined for the queen's new grotto, and which was embroidered all over with seed-pearl; whilst the Queen reclined on a couch near them, issuing her orders, or telling such incidents of the previous day, as were most likely to amuse little Viola, and to teach her what was good and lovely.

When the time came to gather up the embroidery threads, and fold together the tapestry, Pearl came by on her way to the palace of green marble. Pearl was Viola's favourite friend; she was young, and full of mirth and frolic; but she could be grave too. None had so sweet and sad a voice to pity the little injured fish, so gentle a hand to bind their wounds, or such patience to hear their sorrows, and Viola liked to share in her labours.

It was a great delight to both, when their recovered favourites were able to leave the hospital and return to their native haunts. Often as they sat at work in the mornings, the little fish, grateful for so much kindness, came waving their fins, and sporting about before the steps of the palace, to catch a glimpse of Pearl and Viola, or to see their Queen. Sometimes she would bid them tell her where they had travelled, and what curious things they had seen; this they thought a great honour, and sometimes had the most amusing adventures to relate, so that Viola learned to watch for the glancing of their silver scales,

and the twinkling of their bright eyes, as one of her pleasures.

The most tiresome of all the queen's subjects were the crabs and lobsters, who were always bent on seeing and touching everything ; but being too heavy and idle to swim in pace with the rest of the train, they used to hold on by their claws to the flowing robes of the sea-nymphs, thereby impeding their progress. They had very little sharp eyes, and were extremely curious ; they were, moreover, very quarrelsome, and were perpetually pinching and fighting each other, especially the lobsters, who would poke their long feelers into everybody's way, and often got them broken in consequence ; upon which they used to run off to the hospital in a miserable plight, and nobody but the gentle Pearl would ever have had patience to nurse them.

The Queen used often to punish them by having them tightly wound up in sea-weeds, so that they could not use their claws ; after which, they became very penitent, and were glad to be allowed to carry on

their strong backs, all the food and other things which Pearl needed in her labours.

Viola used to look forward with great pleasure to the approach of evening, when Ulva came with Doris and Lorea to take her abroad with the Queen. At first, Ulva used to lift the child in her arms ; but soon she learnt to ride a quiet old Dolphin, who was too old to gambol and curvet as the Queen's sea-horse did, while Doris and Lorea held the bridle-rein, and taught her to manage it.

As she grew older, the Queen used to take her round the coasts and bays far beyond her fatherland, and as they rose to the surface, she became accustomed to the human forms they often saw ; for, unlike her companions, she felt no fear, and liked to watch them, and especially to see the little children playing on the beach.

Years passed away, and Viola, no longer a child, grew lovelier every day, and more precious in the eyes of the water-nymphs, who had reared her with so much tenderness. They would fain have kept her with them for ever ; but the Queen was wise and

good ; she knew that Viola must return to her kindred, and that it would be wrong and selfish to detain her below, after she had reached her sixteenth year, which was now close at hand.

It was about this time that an event happened, which had great influence on Viola's future life.

One afternoon as she was folding away her tapestry, and preparing to set out with Pearl to the hospital, a low rumbling sound, which had been audible the whole morning, became each moment louder, and Pearl said,—

“Ah ! Viola, there is a fearful storm above, how many poor patients we shall find to-day ; make haste, or we shall be very late, and the sea-feathers will be lighted before we return.”

At this moment the Queen appeared ; “Stay, Viola, my child,” she said, “Pearl must leave you with me to-day. There is a dreadful storm above, and I have work for you. Put on this white mantle, you cannot be tossed about whilst you wear it, but may float on the waves at pleasure ; and you will only appear to human eyes like the foam of the sea.”

And taking her by the hand, the queen rose with her to the surface. There Viola beheld a terrible sight: the waves were tumbling about all flecked with foam; the winds were raging madly, and it being high tide, a long white line marked the rocky shore, and showed how the chafing billows beat upon its dark steep sides.

Above the noise of the sea rose the echoing thunder, and streams of forked lightning fell into the seething waves.

Beating about on the surface of the water was the wreck of a stately vessel; the masts and rigging were cut away, and trembling on the tossed and riven timbers, were the few who remained of her crew.

There was amongst them a man of noble aspect, whose countenance betokened that he had reached mid-life, not without tasting some of the toils, and some of the trials, which fall to the lot of mortals.

As Viola and the Queen floated in the foam close by, they heard him say,—

“Courage, men! courage! I have been saved in

worse straits than this! Cling to the ship as long as her beams hold together. They will see our signals from the land. We shall be saved yet. Courage, then!"

"Noble, brave man!" cried Viola, in an agony of pity; "cannot we save him, dear Queen?"

"Noble, indeed!" replied the Queen; "for see his face, he does not believe his own words. He has some whom he loves on shore, doubtless; for look, while he cheers the sailors, he is pale and calm. He believes they must all perish, but he will not say so."

"Let me save him," implored Viola, weeping; "I cannot bear to see him die!"

"Wait awhile, my child, and see."

At this moment the wind wafted a feeble cheer across the waters. How electrical was its effect! The storm-tossed desponding crew sprang as it were to life, and gave back the cry again and again, till at last there appeared on the top of the waves a boat with four men. Down it went below into the deep trough of the sea. Ah! moment of

agonizing suspense, would it sink, or reappear? Once more it rose, this time close at hand.

“Now, Viola, help me!” said the Queen. And they dived under the boat and held it firm, whilst the same voice said,—

“Now, my men, be quick and ready! No; I will see you all safe first;” and he waited till every one of the crew was in the boat. Then Viola heard another voice, distinct and clear above the raging of the storm, welcoming him, and entreating him to hold fast, and to remember who was praying for him on the shore.

Viola looked over the side of the boat, and saw that he who spoke took the helm, gave orders which were obeyed on the instant, and in all things seemed to command. His head was uncovered, and the wind tossed his dark locks in wild disorder round his handsome face, whose expression was of great firmness, mingled with a certain brightness and sweetness, as his eye glanced over the men whom his gallant daring had saved.

“Rudolph, my faithful squire,” said the brave

knight, "you have saved us! Twice I owe my life to you, and for *her* sake I thank you. How does she bear this?"

"I left my lady well in health, but sad at heart, in the chapel of St. Agnes, whither she retired to pray for our success," said the esquire; and the winds and stormy waters drowned his voice.

Over every heaving wave, unseen, did the Queen and Viola steady the little frail boat, so that ere long it safely reached the shore; when, taking advantage of a receding wave, they threw themselves beneath it as it stooped its feathery crest, and returned together to the palace of yellow marble.

After this, a change fell upon Viola. She lost her gaiety of heart, and her bright and winning smile was seldom seen. Yet she neglected nothing of her daily employments. She embroidered with Coralline and Sepiola; she went daily to the hospital with Pearl; and, though Doris and Lorea no longer held the bridle of the sea-horse she now rode in the queen's processions, she was still to

them, and to all, loving and kind as ever. But they noticed that their darling was no longer the same Viola whose hopes and joys were theirs.

For some days the Queen watched her with a sad heart. She loved her so much that she would have liked to keep her for ever. But to do this, Viola must have renounced her kindred, and the ties that bound her heart to heart with the inhabitants of earth, and she would not think of it for an instant. No; Viola must leave her, and the time was nigh at hand.

One day the Queen called her, saying, she was about to visit her new grotto, and that they must go together. As soon as they were alone, she said,—

“Viola, my dear child, it has not escaped my notice how changed you have been since the day we saw the wreck, in that terrible storm. I am not about to bid you tell me why you are silent and sad; why you, who once so loved our society, now seek to be alone. Perhaps I know more of your heart than you could tell me; and I do not

sorrow because your affections are divided from us, but rather try to rejoice for your sake, much as I shall grieve to lose you. It shall be my care to make your parting from us as gentle as possible; but I must tell you that you are of mortal birth, and it is now right that you should know everything connected with the time when you first came amongst us a little tender child."

The Queen then told Viola her early history, and that the time was come when she must leave the sea-maidens and their home, and return to her own kindred.

"You can never come back to us while you live," she said, "nor can we hold commune with you; but we shall be often near you, for we haunt the rocks and shores near your father's castle. I have many a time seen your mother walking by the river's side, weeping, when your father has been in the wars. And when he has returned to her, they have wandered there together, talking of you, their little lost child. See, when you came to us, you wore this little diamond cross. Your lady

mother will recognise it when she sees you again."

Viola listened, breathless, to this strange story, and a feverish, restless longing took possession of her as she thought of her father and mother, and how long they had believed her dead. They had not forgotten her though. And, oh! to see them again! How could she have been kept in ignorance of this strange history so long?

But as these thoughts brought tears into her eyes, she turned, and beheld the Queen's sad face, who well divined what was passing in her mind. Viola remembered her love and kindness, and, kissing her hand, besought her forgiveness, saying, that whatever the future might have in store for her, she could never forget her, or the sea-maidens, and the happy peaceful years she had passed in their beautiful home.

Two days passed away: the sea-nymphs had been told that Viola must leave them; but when, neither she nor they knew, and none asked, for they were too sorrowful.

It was evening. Viola had returned late with Pearl from a long and tiring expedition; and, as she sank to rest on the steps of yellow marble, the sweet voices of the sea-nymphs, and the soft, low murmuring of the little waves, that played in ripples at her feet, grew fainter and fainter, her eyes closed, and she fell asleep.

As she slept, the Queen came from the inner hall, and, looking at her sorrowfully for some moments, said,—

“She must leave us to-night. All of you come with me, and we will lift our darling to the shore of her earthly home.”

Then the sea-maidens came one by one, and kissed Viola’s brow, each laying some little gift on her bosom, or in the folds of her dress, and with tearful and averted eyes they took her in their arms, and rose with her to the surface of the water.

It was bright moonlight, and they sailed with her up the river, to the rock where her father’s castle stood. As they advanced, the Queen saw

one solitary figure moving upon the river's brink, and knew that he beheld them. So lifting Viola gently to the turfy bank, with a low melancholy wail like the sighing of the wind, the sea-nymphs disappeared.

When she opened her eyes, Viola found herself inhaling the fresh evening air, and by the light of the moon beheld, kneeling by her side, one whom she had seen before. It was a face she could not forget. She recognised him now; it was he whom she had seen in the boat, which had saved the drowning crew and their brave leader, it was Rudolph, the young esquire.

When she could collect her scattered thoughts, Viola looked up to him with the simple confidence of a child, and said,—

“My father and my mother dwell in yonder castle. They lost me in the river, long ago; but the sea-nymphs carried me to their grottos, and have restored me now, that I may return to my home. I pray you lead me thither.”

The young esquire looked upon her sweet face,

and he loved her, she was so gentle, and so fair.

He led her up the rock to the castle gate, with his drawn sword in his hand, feeling so fierce in guarding her from harm, that he almost longed for some marauder to pass by, that he might attack and vanquish him. The old watch-dog, who was unchained in the court, he had well-nigh slain on the spot, as he rushed forward to bay at the stranger; but no sooner did he perceive who it was, than he licked Viola's hand, and lifting up his head to be caressed, seemed to welcome her to her ancestral home.


"Ah! dear old Caspar!" she said, "we remember each other well." Then turning to Rudolph she added, "it is passing strange; I could recall nothing, not even my mother's face, when I was with the sea-maidens, but now I recollect everything around me as if I had seen it but yesterday."

"Who is this, then?" asked Rudolph, smiling, as they saw the warder coming to the gate.

"Sigismund of the Halberd!" cried Viola, "I remember him well."

Sigismund stood as one paralysed. He beheld a figure in white garments leaning on Rudolph's arm. The voice was like the voice of the Lady Hildegunda, yet it recalled one long since, as he thought, hushed for ever. And when Viola spoke again, and made herself known to him, he was almost beside himself.

"Ah! sweet lady," he said, half weeping, for he was growing an old man; "I, too, had nearly lost my life on that terrible day. When I returned to tell of Gretchen's awful death, and how I had seen you sink below, my lord's anger was kindled, and he swore that I should be hung from the highest turret of the castle. But my lady, heaven bless her! begged my life. 'Husband,' she said, 'can this man's death bring back our child to life? Let us not stain her dear memory with his blood. Let him live.' And my lord hearkened to her, and gave me my life. I have been with him in battle since then; and once, heaven be praised! I repaid the debt, when an uplifted battle-axe had well-nigh made my lady a mourning widow. I have served them long and faithfully, and



I would now, or at any moment, shed my life's blood for them."

Who can describe the joy with which the Lady Hildegunda received and recognised her long lost child? Or what was Viola's proud delight, when, in her noble father, she beheld the brave knight whom she had so longed to save, when he was cheering on the shipwrecked sailors with the hopes he could not share himself.

Every day Viola grew dearer to her parents, who delighted to hear her tell of the sea-maidens, their lovely home, their daily employments, and all that had befallen her since they first sorrowed for her as lost. Her sweet voice was heard all day carolling in pure gladness through the corridors of the old castle, and its grim halls grew bright, and joyous, as they were when the Lady Hildegunda came to them first, a fair young bride.

It was one sunny morning, that Viola's father was walking to and fro on the terrace overhanging the river, when he was joined by his young esquire. "He is thinking of his spurs, as I used when I was

like him ;" thought the knight, as they walked some moments in silence.

"This is three times we have measured the terrace, Rudolph," said he at length ; "and though you speak not, I know you have somewhat on your mind, for I have watched you these past days, and seen that you are not so gay at heart as a young esquire should be, of rich inheritance, noble birth, and so nigh the spurs of knighthood ! Speak ; is it aught in which I can serve you ? These many years you have been to me as mine own son, since the day when your noble father, my true friend and brother-in-arms, brought you to me, praying me to train his boy in the laws of chivalry. And do I not owe you my life twice saved ? Speak, then, and fear not to ask of me what you will."

Then answered Rudolph, with a clear and open brow, though his voice was low and hesitating ;

"I have indeed a boon to ask, yet it is so great an one I scarcely dare to speak it. But, if I have found favour in your sight these years, for my father's sake be not angry. I love the Lady Viola. Since first

I found her, but freshly restored from the cruel sea, I have loved her. Tell me only what I shall do to gain your favour to my prayer, and to win her, and I will go to the ends of the earth for her sake."

"You have asked my best treasure, Rudolph," said the knight at length; "but I will not withhold it, for you are to me a son. See, here comes the maiden." And at that moment Viola, blushing and lovely, stood in the porch with her lady mother.

"Come hither, my child!" said her father. And as she came to his side, he put her hand into Rudolph's, and consented to their betrothal.

"Ah!" said the Lady Hildegunda, "wilt thou leave me, my Viola? Mournful shall I be in the long winter nights, and lonely in the summer days; so long lost, so lately found, and now to leave me!"

But Viola said no new home should tempt her to leave her father's castle, and Rudolph and she would live there together.

It was some weeks after this, that the king was again passing that way, and remained one night at

the castle with his train. Then it was that Rudolph, having faithfully kept his solemn and lonely vigil in the chapel of St. Agnes, received, at the king's own hand, the sword and spurs of knighthood.

The next morning's sun rose brightly upon Viola's wedding-day ; and as she stood at the altar by Rudolph's side, in her white robes and the wreath of water-lilies she wore in remembrance of the sea-maidens, the King said that she was the loveliest bride that monarch ever bestowed on a loyal and deserving subject.

On her bridal morning, a necklace and coronal of large pearls, with other beautiful gifts, all dripping from the water, were found on the terrace by the river's side. Viola knew whence they came.

Often when she and her husband wandered there in the sweet evenings, she would tell him of the days she had spent in the crystal grottos beneath the sea ; and of the terrible storm, when she first beheld his face. Sometimes she heard her name wafted on the breeze, as if invisible forms were on the water below. But though she knew they were

often near her, she never saw the sea-maidens again.

As years rolled on, the Lady Hildegunda and her brave husband lay amidst their ancestral tombs, side by side, in the old chapel of the castle.

Then Rudolph and Viola, at the King's desire, went to reside near the royal palace; and there he made Rudolph a belted earl, for he delighted to honour him, esteeming his wisdom in council, as much as his bravery in the battle-field.

And amid all the noble ladies who graced the court, were none more true-hearted, or more beloved, than the beautiful Countess Viola.



THE THREE KNIGHTS.

THE THREE KNIGHTS.

It was a bright moonlight night, the air was fresh and keen, and the stars, sparkling in the cloudless sky, glanced smiling at their own reflection in a calm clear lake, which stood on the outskirts of a great pine forest.

Fast pacing up and down on the borders of this lake were three young knights, whose newly-won spurs rang cheerily in the frosty air, as they trode in measured step together.

"I am resolved," said the youngest of the three. "I have not been in haste; I have considered well, and the thought nerved my arm on yonder battlefield, and helped me to my spurs. They say this maiden is of peerless beauty, that she dwells in

the farthest regions, whither few dare venture ; but I will devote my life to seeking for her. If I die, they will say of me, 'he was young, but he was brave too ; for he wore the spurs of knighthood.' Yes, brothers-in-arms, I am resolved. Hearken now to the music in the forest. Ye will say it is the wind amongst the pine-branches. To me, those soft, sweet tones, are her voice, calling me to take her away from the tyrant who enthralls her, to bring her to my home. And I *will* rescue her."

"But," said the second Knight, "how know you that the tale is true? They say this peerless maiden dwells far off, that the path lies through ways of difficulty and danger, which are haunted by her captor, that tall shadowy being with the dark mantle, who bars the road to her ; and many a young knight has died an evil death, nor ever seen her face. I cannot believe the story."

"Not believe it!" said Bertram ; "I know it is true. Something tells me so, and that I shall see her. Do I not hear her voice day and night? Do I not dream of her? She lives, and awaits my

coming to deliver her. I am resolved; I will seek her till death."

"Nay then," said Rolf, the elder of the three, who had listened hitherto in silence, "I will go with thee. Thou shalt not perish alone. I, too, have dreamed of this beautiful Gloriana, and I too will seek her to the death."

"Well, my comrades," added Eric, the second Knight, "I, your sworn brother, will go with you, and little honour to him who flags first. True, I discredit the tale, and do not believe in the existence of the maiden; but we shall see."

Then they agreed amongst themselves, like true knights of chivalry, that all should try equally to win the lady's favour, each for himself; and that the two disappointed suitors, bearing no ill will to their fortunate comrade, should return to gather new laurels in the battle-field.

Having thus pledged themselves to each other, they parted. But still the young Knight Bertram lingered by the shore of the lake, walking alone, engrossed in dreams of the future.

It seemed as if he held converse with the unseen object of his devotion, for whenever the upper branches of the pine-trees, yielding to the touch of the passing wind, breathed forth their sweet music, he would listen enraptured, and answer aloud,—

“I come, dear maiden; wait but awhile! Ah! sing to me once more. Was ever voice like thine?”

Anon the stems of the tall trees, bending to a fiercer blast, would sound as the bass chords of some gigantic harp. This seemed to Bertram as the voice of the mysterious being who held the beautiful Gloriana in captivity, warning him from venturing into his dominions, and hushing the maiden's sweet tones with his terrible voice.

The next morning the Three Knights set forth on the journey fraught with consequences most momentous to each.

The sun was brilliant, the air clear; and as they glanced at each other's animated faces, beheld their glittering accoutrements, the noble steeds

they bestrode, and recalled what valiant deeds each had seen the others do, they inwardly rejoiced and felt ready to face all dangers, and make light of them, together.

For some days they held on their way, united in thought and action. Only Eric, who discredited the existence of the maiden, used to jest, and say he knew the journey would come to nought.

"Ah!" he would exclaim; "we have not had an adventure yet! For my part, I think we may take our time, and explore the country as we pass through it."

"Do as ye list," said Bertram; "but for me, I cannot stay. I see nothing beautiful in all the land, save when she smiles upon me in my dreams. I hear no music that is not discord to mine ears, save at night, when the wood-spirits waft her voice to me through the trees. And for adventures, I keep my sword sharp to do battle with the enemies that will beset my path. Do as it pleaseth you, but for me, I am resolved; I cannot stay."

"Nor I;" added Rolf, in his quiet, decided tone.

So they journeyed yet further towards the northern country, whither they were bound.

At length they reached a remote hamlet, which was built for shelter midway upon the shelving rocks of a wild mountain pass, beyond which lay, on one side, the sea, and on the other, an immense forest.

As they rode through it, the whole village came forth to see them ; children clinging to their mothers, old and young, robust and sickly ; and as the knights dismounted, they were immediately surrounded by a crowd, some talking loud and fast, some weeping, and all eager in asking some great boon.

When the clamour was somewhat hushed, Rolf drew aside one of the old men, and inquired what they asked.

“Ah, Excellency,” cried he ; “all the village is in grief. The winter is at hand, the hills and valleys are covered with snow, and the great white bears that infest these regions are hungering for prey. They are so fierce that few dare encounter

them. But three days ago, as our children were playing by the outskirts of the village, two of these fearful creatures descended upon them, and carried off each a child. All the neighbours were in arms; and, alas! mine only son, the most renowned bear-hunter of these shores, set forth with three stalwart men to give chase. They found the bears' den at the foot of the pass, and, woe is me! savage and enraged, they tore him limb from limb; and of the three who were with him, one only returned to tell the tale, unharmed, but half dead with cold, and paralysed with fear. Doubtless your brave Excellencies have heard of our misery, and are come to save us."

As he spoke, the old man watched the Knight's face with eager looks, as if his life and the lives of many hung on his reply.

At this, Rolf, whose thoughts were chasing each other thick and fast, but whose calm and immovable countenance gave no sign, replied,—

"We shall see, good man; but now, I pray you, tell us where we can rest to-night."

"At my hut, if our poor fare will suffice you, and be welcome," answered the old man, as he led away their horses.

"Now, Rolf," said Eric, drawing his comrade apart, his sparkling eyes and animated countenance showing how eagerly he had heard the tale, "listen to me. I came on this expedition with two desires : to act in brotherhood with you and Bertram, and to take my share in any adventures which might offer on the way. Here is the thing I most wished for. We are bound by our oath to succour the distressed, and methinks it would be a right valiant deed to head a band of these young men, whom the panic has unnerved ; and, sooth to say, I weary of our daily rides from morn to sunset. Moreover, as you know, I disbelieve the tale of the peerless Gloriana. So I will e'en tarry here awhile, and help these poor people, and thereby take away the remorse with which I know you would deny their prayer."

Rolf looked regretfully on his friend. He was in a strait. Honour and inclination alike prompted

him to go forward with Bertram, whom he had promised not to forsake ; yet to leave these unfortunates to their fate, was like evading his knightly vow to succour the distressed. Here was Eric ready to solve the difficulty ; yet he regretted, and would fain not have left him behind. Finally, however, it was so arranged ; and early in the morning, Rolf and Bertram saw their brother-in-arms depart, full of the excitement of the chase, attended by all the young and vigorous men of the hamlet, proud to follow so brave and noble a leader.

The sun was but just up, as Rolf and Bertram mounted their horses, and the old man their host volunteered to lead them through the intricacies of the pass. When he heard whither they were bound, he said,—

“ Ah ! many a time have I heard of the lady Gloriana. It is true, indeed, that she lives, and that she is in the power of a mysterious being who haunts the territory where she dwells. I know that many a brave knight has striven hard to reach her, but such are never heard of more. He who

holds her back from the sight of those who would deliver her, is himself no mortal. Cold and heat are alike to him, but he dwells in those regions where daylight is seldom seen, where the stars illumine the darkness of early morning, and the sun shines at midnight. He paces through that haunted land alone, wrapped in a dark mantle. His face has never been beheld by human eyes, but his touch is death; once enveloped in the foldings of that wide robe, the victim sleeps to awaken in another land than this. His palace is of ice, and the glittering of its towers may be seen afar off. Some say the maiden dwells there. But I am an old man, I have seen strange things in my time, and I can tell you that it is not so; therefore I warn you not to cross that threshold. Further on is the place of her captivity, but sometimes her tyrant brings her to his ice palace, to grace the banquets he holds there, and she is conducted back again at midnight with great pomp and ceremony. It may chance, therefore, that at such a moment you may see her. But," he added, looking

on the tall noble figures of the young Knights, and wondering at the dauntless courage with which they were venturing into such perils, "But, your Excellencies will do well to consider, before you go whence there may be no return. Suppose the terrors of the long unpeopled journey passed, that you meet no dark-robed figure, or that he lets you go free, that you escape crossing the threshold of the Palace of Ice, and that you reach the tower wherein the maiden is immured; before you can enter or have speech with her, you must conquer foes both fierce and subtle.

"The guardians who keep watch over her are dogs of most terrible ferocity, and are held in the leash by a grim old man called Havoc, whose cries will urge them on you as you approach. If you can cut your way through these, you may indeed win the maiden, yet hardly without scath."

"Tell me, old man," said Bertram, who had listened attentively to the words of the guide, "tell me what you have heard of the lady Gloriana, since you know so much concerning her. Is she

unhappy as they say, longing to be free, and impatient of captivity ? ”

“ It is not for me, Sir Knight, to speak of one so exalted ; but I have heard the wood-spirits on stormy nights telling her story aloud to the winds ; of her queenly presence, her radiant beauty, and her love of noble deeds. It is only some knight, brave and bold, but good as he is brave, who could ever hope to win her.”

Rolf and Bertram looked on each other, and in the glance of each was written, “ Heaven speed thee ! for thou art such an one.” So unselfish were their loyal hearts.

They had now arrived at the mouth of the pass which opened on a wide and boundless plain ; and with gold in his hand their guide took leave of them.

Long he watched their departing figures with a sad foreboding. His heart was softened by the loss of his brave and well-beloved son, and he felt pity and sorrow to take a long farewell of these two, as young and as brave as he had been.

For some hours the Knights rode on, until they beheld in the distance a dark blue line, indicating that they approached one of the vast northern forests, which, as their guide had told them, they must reach at mid-day, and keeping to the outskirts, follow the irregular winding of the trees, rather than venture into those mysterious depths, untrodden by mortal foot, the dread abode of wild beasts and other terrible creatures. Two days they travelled thus, only resting at night in the forsaken huts left by the wood-cutters, where they and their faithful steeds shared the miserable shelter together ; and it was now towards noon on the third day, when Bertram began to be very anxious about Rolf, and would have turned back but that Rolf would not permit it. At length he said,—

“ Bertram, think you that we are in the regions haunted by the dark-robed man? I will own to you, who have seen me face peril in battle without shrinking, that I dread to meet him ; I could not survive it. Let me now say one thing. If I should become his victim and you are left, remember me

at the best. Forget any harsh word I may ever have said, and believe, that had I won the maiden, I should have rejoiced with a heavy heart for your loss. That it will not be so, I know now. But for yourself, my Bertram, fear not. A bright destiny is before you. And when you shall bask in the sunlight of a fair and prosperous future, think of thy true and faithful brother-in-arms; think that Rolf loved thee better than his life!"

Bertram could speak no word in answer to this, his heart was full; and there was that whispering to his spirit, which told him Rolf's foreboding was no idle fancy, and that he should indeed be left alone. Stretching forward, he clasped in his the mailed hand which firmly met his grasp, and looked sorrowfully into the truthful eyes, which, whether they gleamed fierce in battle, or smiled in the brotherly kindness that was between them, were alike to him the mirror of a loyal and stainless soul.

They were long silent; Rolf yielding more and more to a sense of drowsiness which would have overpowered his strength, but for the agony of

a burning thirst which increased upon him every moment. His grasp on the bridle-rein was numb and stiff; his eyes were heavy, and his brain confused; but no word of complaint passed his lips.

By this time the short-lived sun went down, a thick blue mist veiled the distance in obscurity, the snow-clad plain looked limitless and forlorn, and creeping amongst the dark fir stems, the chill vapours rose higher and higher; while through the trees, whose branches rocked slowly and sorrowfully to and fro, a wild sad sound was breathed by the loitering winds. Side by side they rode, and spoke no word. Daylight was fading, weird sounds rang through the forest; Bertram grasped the crossed handle of his sword in silent prayer.

Suddenly a wild cry from Rolf startled him.

"Look!" he said, "I see him! Look at his waving mantle! He comes! It is for me!"

And as he spoke, Bertram, with a beating heart, beheld a dark and phantom form advancing through the mist. It approached, it waved its long floating

robe, it covered Rolf with those fatal folds, and Bertram saw him no more.

The horse which Bertram rode, before weary and drooping, now started as if electrified. The chill mist no longer benumbed his limbs ; but terror-stricken at the awful presence of the phantom, he sprang forward as if pursued.

A less skilful horseman than the young Knight had been thrown, but Bertram, now fully roused from the grief and horror that were creeping over him, seized the reins with no feeble hand. But nothing could check the speed of the frightened horse. On it flew as if supernaturally strengthened for the hour. The before boundless forest receded, faded, disappeared ; and onward like the wind rushed horse and rider.

By degrees, that headlong speed through the frozen air and stupifying mist, into a distance so uncertain, over streams, across lakes, through what obstacles he had neither sight nor reason to discern, so bewildered the faculties of Bertram's mind, and the powers of his body, that all he had sense and

feeling left for, was to grasp tight the reins, lay hold of the cross of his sword, and pray, neither for life nor death, but for protection. Mortal foes he might meet and vanquish, but in these regions there were enemies more subtle, against whom arms were of no avail.

Across the way there now stretched a long low wall. The blinded eyes of horse and rider beheld it not; and the speed of their flight brought them into such violent contact with it, that Bertram was hurled into the air, and fell inside the enclosure. The sudden shock recalled his energies from their mazy clouded dream; he rose, and supporting himself on his sword, beheld a new and wondrous scene.

To his right, at some distance, lay the sea, dark as midnight; but from behind its boundary-line were rising fountains of living fire. Overhead the violet sky blushed with a pale rosy light, melting into a saffron radiance, in which the ceaseless pulsations of the fire fountains throbbed and died. Again, through the pale brilliant glow that bathed

the heavens, shot streams of light, now sharp-pointed as the spears of some angel-host advancing towards earth ; anon like the plumes of their glittering helmets waving in mid-air ; whilst a sound, altogether indescribable to mortal ears, rushed across the silent sea.

Bertram's senses were enchained. He felt no fear at this wonderful display, but rather that hushed and quiet awe, which seemed to bring the unseen world, whence such a manifestation was but as the opening of an outer portal, strangely near. He thought of Rolf ; but without any of the grief and trouble that he once would have felt. There was nothing to lament for him ; over one so brave and good no evil phantom would be permitted to have power ; and his memory in some way mingled itself with the resplendent scene, so that Bertram thought that he, with other good spirits, must be floating near him in the pure and pearly light.

As he stood thus musing, a voice addressed him by name, saying,—

“ Sir Bertram, you are brave, not all the perils of

this haunted region have had power to daunt you ; you are loyal, and your shield is stainless ; behold, your reward is at hand. The lady Gloriana knows of your approach, she sends you her scarf ; see, it is of crimson and gold ; bind it on your arm, for you have not yet overcome all that lies before you. She sends you, too, a flask of wine and a wheaten cake. Eat, for you will need your strength."

"What !" cried the young knight, turning sharply round, "What ! my lady herself deign to recognise me ? Does she know my name ? Does she indeed care for my well-being, and wish me victorious ? Tell me, does she——"


But his eyes were dazzled with intently gazing up into the heavens, and ere he recovered their sight, the hand that had brought him the token scarf, and the voice which had spoken his lady's greeting, had vanished away, leaving by his side a silver wine-flask in the shape of a fir-cone, and some wheaten bread, of which he thankfully partook : and in renewed strength he shook off all feeling

of fatigue, and trode the crisp snow with a sense of power to do and to dare.

He felt that the crisis of his fate was near, and that his energies must neither wander nor sleep ; so he laid aside even the hallowed remembrance of his beloved Rolf, being satisfied that he knew no more either sorrow or pain.

He recked nothing of the toils he had passed through on the journey, but he put away the past, and ceased to dwell upon the future. All he now thought of was to be ready, prompt ; equal to whatever might be at hand.

At this moment he became aware of a bright light which shone behind him, and which in his first bewildered vision of the illuminated heavens he had not perceived. It came from a vast palace, flanked by towers, and pierced with many windows. Its walls were built with blocks of clear ice, cut like crystal, and faced with innumerable devices ; and the whole vast building, with its domes, its minarets, and its crested pinnacles, reflected every change of the glittering skies, whose rays of pale



fire still crowned the sleeping sea, like the halo round some saint of old. Now the arched doorway gleamed in crimson light, again the dome shone like molten gold, while a cold bright radiance quivered on the western towers. Strains of unearthly music issued from the palace, and sounds of revelry, the ringing of silver flagons, the rush of feet, and the murmur of voices. This, then, was the Ice Palace, whose threshold he had been warned not to cross, and grasping his sword-hilt with a firm hand, the young knight approached nearer to one of the tall windows which opened to the ground, and bent forward to look in. To his surprise he could see no one. A grand banquet was spread on the table, crowned with vessels richly jewelled and all of silver; chairs stood around on the icy floor; crystal couches glittering with the frost diamonds, and carved in strange shapes like the branches of trees, the heads of wild animals, and in the form of gigantic sea-shells; but though he heard footsteps and voices, he saw no bodily form.

Then there was a noise of bolts withdrawn, and the clanking of chains; the great door of the palace was thrown open, and a blast more piercing than the keen night air, and damp with a cold dew that chilled to Bertram's heart, rushed forth, as he raised his eyes and beheld on the threshold the waving mantle of the dark-robed man.

Addressing Bertram in a voice whose tones crept through every nerve, he said, "Who art thou that darest face me in mine own dwelling-place?"

"I am a true knight; with my strong arm and my good sword, in the strength of a pure heart, I dare face even thee, thou tyrant! Tell me, where is the lady Gloriana? I come to win her, and to set her free."

In the silence that ensued, Bertram heard the beating of his own heart; he knew how the phantom was counting over his strength, his young and vigorous frame, his sinewy right arm and his trusty sword, and that they were of no more value under his relentless scrutiny, than the strength of a little child.

"Come in with me," at length he said in those unearthly tones, "I can show thee the lady whom thou seekest, she shall bind thy brows with laurel. Come!"

The young knight burned to avenge his lost comrade; he longed to rid the land of this pervading presence; he thirsted to destroy him who had long held in captivity the lady of his knightly love; but he felt no sword could pierce the folds of that phantom robe, which hid he knew not what; and that mortal weapons were of no avail. He must perforce withhold his hand.

"All good angels shield me!" he cried, "I will not follow thee. The lady whom I love is not there. Yonder halls of ice cannot tempt me to enter their haunted precincts, nor will I follow at thy call."

While he was yet speaking, a large purple robe was wrapped round the knight's form by invisible hands, as if to save him from the chill damp atmosphere that issued from the palace, and a silver shield was raised before him, which hid the phantom from his gaze.

"Forbear," said a voice, "it is not for thee to harm him. Hast thou no pity for his youth, his beauty, his loving generous heart? Begone, thou fatal presence, and touch him not."

At this moment a burst of martial music rent the air, the shield and mantle were withdrawn, and Bertram, with the scarf twined round his sword-arm, stood eagerly watching. Then he beheld, passing swiftly by, a long procession, with waving banners of crimson and blue, the glittering of arms, and the prancing of horses, whose tread was hushed on the hitherto untrodden snow.

The inspiring strains of the silver bugles rang clear through the night air, and Bertram's very heart leaped wildly to the sound, while he beheld in their midst, on a snow-white palfrey whose housings swept the ground, a maiden of such peerless beauty as even his dreams had never pictured. Her raven locks were floating beneath a diadem of brilliants, and an ermine mantle wrapt her from the frosty winds. Her starry eyes were fixed on him, and as she passed, where on bended knee he knelt to do

her homage, she cast on him a smile so sweet and radiant, that at that moment he felt more than recompensed for all he had suffered for her sake.

But even as he gazed, penetrated by her glance, and wrapped in wondering admiration at her marvellous beauty, the procession passed by, the waving banners faded out of sight, and the sound of the bugles grew faint and far. This was no time to dream; Bertram started to his feet, and rushing through the wide open gates, just passed them, ere they closed their iron lips to have shut him in.

Outside he beheld an armed man, mounted, to his great joy holding the bridle of his own faithful steed whom he had believed to be dead, and, mounting him, rode fast in the steps of his silent attendant.

It might be an hour ere they came in sight of a lofty tower, whence he heard the barking of dogs, whose size he conjectured from their deep-chested bay. Here then, in wearisome captivity, dwelt the lady of his devotion.

As they drew nearer his guide disappeared, and

he saw standing in the gateway an old man, grim of aspect, whose long white hair and beard fluttered wildly in the wind. He held aloft a lighted torch, by whose red glare Bertram saw that he drew in his hand the leash which restrained three ferocious dogs, whose size and strength made it hard for him to hold them.

"Who are you? Whence come you?" shouted the old man, whose thin quavering voice rose shrill above the baying of the dogs. "Go back! you cannot enter here; I warn you back, or I will let loose the dogs!"

"Loose them," said Bertram calmly, "I am not afraid. I am expected, and nothing can keep me back."

As he spoke, with a wild and fierce yell the old man slipped the leash; and with a bound, the three dreadful animals rushed on the knight with open mouths. The first he disabled by a heavy stroke of his sharp sword, which glittered blood-red in the angry torch-light. The second too he dashed from him, maimed and howling; but his horse being

terrified and unmanageable, now swerved and threw him to the ground. He had almost yielded life in the struggle, but as he felt the hot breath of the fierce hound, and saw its white teeth and gaping mouth close to his throat, he released his sword-arm in a last desperate effort, and shortening the blade, pierced his ferocious adversary to the heart. Now, then, was his only chance of escape, for the other two were limping back, still more savage, to the encounter; so, dashing past the old man, who was shrieking, leaping, and whirling his torch in mad rage, he crossed a square paved court, and beheld a door opening wide into a lofty hall, hung with banners, shields, and pennons, and with the escutcheons and arms of knights; for as often as these had died, or given up the search despairing of success, the dark-robed man had brought the insignia of each to hang them up in the place of the lady's captivity, there to be ever in mournful remembrance before her eyes.

Onward he rushed through corridor and gallery, until he came to a door at the foot of a long flight

of winding stairs leading to the highest turret : breathless and eager he hastened on, and as he reached the topmost step, a door was opened, he crossed the threshold at a bound, and there, bright reward of all his sufferings and his toils, he beheld the beautiful lady of his love, the peerless Gloriana. In a voice clear and liquid as the fall of an enchanted fountain, she said, smiling,

“Thou truest and bravest! welcome, thrice welcome !”

Then as the knight bent before her, she advanced slowly towards him, and with an air of ineffable grace, wherein a natural reserve blended with the dignity of a queen, and the grateful admiration of a captive for her deliverer, she laid her hand in his.

Brave as he was in battle, and calm in the hour of danger, he knelt for some moments, spell-bound and speechless at the sight of her enchanting beauty ; half breathless with a silent awe to find himself so suddenly before her, and feeling himself scarcely mortal in the serene pure atmosphere of her presence.

But as she would have withdrawn her hand, he

held it fast, and told her of his long and faithful love, and though he spoke lightly of the dangers past, and the trials encountered for her sake, he pleaded earnestly that she would be his great reward, and return with him to the home and inheritance he had left to win her.


Tears, but not of sorrow, glittered in her beautiful eyes as she answered,

“Think not, though you make light of them, that I do not know every strife where you have vanquished, every peril you have faced. I have counted every step of your toilsome journey, though you knew it not; I have seen your friends, the one forsaking, the other taken from you. I have wept for your sufferings, but I have triumphed in your dauntless courage, and your unshaken fidelity. After such proofs of your devotion, it would ill become me to draw back; the hand then which you crave, shall be yours; take me to your southern home, and believe that I can never forget the past.”

Then hand in hand they descended the winding stair together. By this time the dawn was breaking,

and as they reached the great gate, the lady's milk-white jennet, and the knight's own good steed, ready caparisoned, stood waiting them. Lifting the maiden to her seat, and wrapping closely round her the soft fair robe of ermine, he mounted beside her, and rode at her bridle-rein.

With the shadows of night, had vanished all its horrors. No grim old man or fierce dogs barred the path ; the sun glittered on the snow in a thousand brilliant scintillations, without power to soften the crisp surface, and its beams hung diamonds on every crusted pine-leaf ; while each massive stem and branch seemed of red-veined marble set in silver. Over the distant hills hovered a thin mist of amethyst and gold ; and nearer at hand, every little spray and frosted leaf marked its sharp clear outline against the azure sky. Their pathway seemed one blaze of dazzling beauty ; Sir Bertram scarce believed it to be the same he had journeyed through so lately ; dreary and toilsome then, but now how different ! No longer did he turn for happiness from the outer world to dreams of her



he loved ; she was by his side ; her sweet voice, no longer to be heard only in the silent night, now fell upon his delighted ear, speaking of her love of knightly deeds, and raising his heart by high and eloquent converse to all that was bright and good ; her smile was beaming on him, and in its light he would have felt no darkness had tempests beset their path, instead of the lovely sunlight that bathed it in beauty.

So short the journey seemed, that almost ere he could have believed it possible, Bertram beheld in the distance the entrance to the rocky pass, and the curling smoke of the little hamlet where Eric had remained behind. He grew thoughtful and perplexed, and checked the even speed of his horse to a slower pace. Observing this, the lady said,—

“What is in thy thoughts? fear not to tell me all.”

“I was doubting,” he replied, “whether to pass this way, or to endeavour to take some other course, lest if we encounter my comrade Eric, he should join us, and his presence might oppress thee.”

"Nay then," she replied, "I must not begin our new life by separating thee from those thou lovest ; I will rather aid thee to draw closer those friendly ties, remembering how much thou hast lost for my sake."

"Thou kindly and gentle spirit !" said the Knight, beholding in her something more akin to heaven than earth. "I cannot regret him who is gone," he continued, lifting his helmet, and glancing upwards as he spoke ; "he is at peace, and I would not, if I could, recall him. I doubt not that he sees and rejoices in my joy, and to wish him back were no proof of love. On, then, if thou wilt indeed greet my brother-in-arms for my sake."

Soon their horses' feet exchanged the noiseless snow paths for the hard sharp echo of the rocky way, and at midday they entered the village.

Thronging the long narrow street was a great crowd of people ; many of whom, assembled round the little church, were singing and waving pine branches aloft, as if some great rejoicing were going forward, and round the door of the old man's hut,

who had guided Rolf and Bertram on their way, an arch of dark fir boughs, adorned with ribbons and streamers, was erected.

Alighting at the well-remembered threshold, Bertram lifted the lady Gloriana, veiled, and wrapped in her rich furs, to the ground. The old man himself came forth to welcome and receive them, scarce believing but that he saw two spirits, so did he wonder at the sight. But interrupting him, Bertram asked him how Sir Eric had fared, and for what were the rejoicings.

“Ah!” said the old man joyfully, “such fortunes have befallen since your Excellencies came amongst us, as never happened in my experience. The day you left me at yonder point, (ah! I will not speak of your brave noble friend, I perceive he has left this toilsome country for a fairer;) that day, Sir Eric and our bravest lads set forth to chase the bears. Not only did they kill the two fiercest, but oh! Excellency, they found my son, whom I thought never to see again. In a sore plight, more dead than alive, they brought him to me; but his

life is spared to my old age. Then a strange adventure chanced to Sir Eric, and, noble and brave as he is, he deserves all happiness. He was returning in triumph with the trophies of the chase, when close by, at the foot of the pass, he beheld a sleigh, whose fiery horses, conscious of the neighbourhood of the bears, had mastered their driver, who losing his grasp of the reins was thrown out into the snow, and near him, unconscious, a lady of exceeding beauty. He brought them to my hut, and in time so won upon the lady's favour, that he has this morning led her to the church, where they are about to be united."

At the end of his tale, the old man, who seemed renewed in youth and vigour by the restoration of his son, rubbed his hands and laughed merrily. He then went out to admire the steeds, and led them out of the keen air to shelter. On his return he found the Knight and his lady had vanished.

"Gone to see the bridal," thought he, "and I'll e'en follow them."

By this time, however, the ringing of bells and

shouts of rejoicing announced the approach of the wedded pair, and he beheld issuing from the porch, instead of one, two veiled and beauteous brides, and two knights walking bare-headed beside them.

"I am an old man," soliloquised he, "and I have seen strange things in my day, but of marvels and miracles there is no end. Truly we live on the borders of the haunted land, and these things savour of its wonders. Well, my son is given back to me, and he is no spirit," he added, as a bright jovial countenance, red with exposure to frost and wind, appeared in the doorway, "and that's a consolation. But I am an old man, and I wander somewhat; though to my mind, no wood-spirit of all I have often heard, but never seen, could be so like a dream as that young Knight's bride!"

As the two Knights stood together a short time after, distributing largess to the crowd, and bidding farewell to their many well-wishers, few could have beheld them without marking their difference of aspect.

Both were young and handsome, and framed alike

for warlike deeds. Both were open-handed and generous, and the faces of each radiant with happiness and kindly feelings. But the countenance of Eric lacked the high-souled expression which sat on Bertram's noble brow, and stamped every feature with a lustrous beauty more spiritual than material.

At last the hour of departure came, and amidst showers of blessings and good wishes, the Knights and their ladies set forth.

They journeyed together to the outskirts of the pine forest, by the borders of whose neighbouring lake the three brothers in arms had first pledged themselves to the expedition, now so wondrously terminated. Here they parted, each for his native home.

Three days afterwards, as Sir Bertram led his lovely bride through his own wide demesnes, and into the princely dwelling-place of his ancestors, he said,

"Once I valued these as no more than a feather's weight in the pleasures of my life, for I deemed my sword and spurs a fairer fortune. Now, for thy

sake, they are precious to me. Here thou shalt reign a Queen, and we will draw around us a kingdom of faithful lieges, who shall learn from us to live this life for its highest aims, and through them to seek that other which shall fear no death."

They stood hand in hand, looking over the lovely country with its fair clustering homesteads, its winding streams, and spreading plains all rich with culture, and glowing with the warm setting sun.

"Yes," she replied, with her radiant smile; "I love the clash of arms, the ring of sword and shield, the waving of plume and banner; and when the bugle calls thou must be no idle Knight for my sake. But above all, we will live for our people; that as they shall learn to love us for our pure and holy lives, when we are taken away from amongst them, they may wish to follow us into a fairer land than this; yes, thou loyal-hearted and noblest Knight, this is indeed to seek true Glory."

PRINCE RAMME.

PRINCE RAMME.

THERE dwelt among far-off regions, in the olden time, a King, who had two daughters. Zurica, the eldest, was surpassingly beautiful ; bewitching in manner, gifted in language, the pride of the King her father, and the delight of his Court. The youngest princess, Aymah, was pale and quiet ; she had none of the sparkling graces, which dazzled the eyes, and bewildered the hearts of her sister's suitors ; but sometimes she mingled in the gaieties of the Court, or sailed in the brilliant little fleet that was moored in a bay, whose quiet waters washed the green turf of the palace gardens, or sometimes, at the King's request, she would join the hunting expeditions into the neighbouring forest, in which he took great pleasure.

On these occasions, the Princess Zurica shone with her usual brilliancy ; mounted on a cream-coloured palfrey, with her silken robes, her flowing curls, and laughing eyes, surrounded by knights and nobles, she was the life of all.

The gentle Princess Aymah would have been far happier in the beautiful bower where she was wont to sit, looking out upon the lovely gardens and marble terraces of the palace, singing to her lute, and tending her flowers ; but it was enough for her that the King should express a wish for her presence, for in all things she was ever prompt to obey him.

The great happiness of her life, was the occasional apparition of the old fairy Patientia, who was her godmother, and who used to visit her in the retirement of her bower. To this fairy she told all her secrets and her troubles ; and by her she was taught many wondrous things, of which her sister Zurica knew nothing. With her, she saw far-off and beautiful countries, whither they went in the fairy's magic chariot drawn by doves ; and together

they dived into the sea, where dwelt a mermaid whom she loved to visit. Sometimes, before sunset, when others thought she was in her bower, the Princess Aymah and her fairy godmother were sailing out to sea on the foam-crested waves, or diving below into the mermaid's grotto, whose walls were of amber, studded with gems, the floors inlaid with coral and mother-o'-pearl, while sea-plants wove their branches of red and green about its foundations, or in feathery wreaths climbed to its arched roof. Rare shells with rosy lips adorned the pathway to it, and nautiluses swam to and fro with purple streamers, carrying messages to other caves, where other mermaids dwelt. Here the Princess learned the habits of these sea-maidens, and their element became familiar to her as the land. Often she floated on the waves holding converse with them, watching the strange creatures that darted by on gold and silver fins, or sported about in joyous gambols; but most she loved the little pearly nautiluses, as they sailed along intent only on their duties.

Amongst other beneficent gifts, her godmother taught the Princess to cultivate the voice she had endowed her with at her birth, and which was exquisitely sweet, though it was only at these times that she could exercise it; she never sang in her palace home, for the Princess Zurica had no voice, and consequently, the Court ignored music.

One day the King called his daughters to him, and said,—

“My children, I am growing old, and it is time that I should be thinking of a successor. I have no son, and I do not choose to divide my kingdom, nor can either of you reign alone; it is therefore my wish that you should both marry. I leave you both free to choose among the young princes who offer themselves, the one each may prefer; but I reserve to myself the power of naming my successor. I shall therefore refrain from biassing your inclinations, but whichever of my sons-in-law I most approve, shall inherit my dominions through his wife. I have lately had many offers of suitors for you from neighbouring kingdoms; the next day or two

will bring some whom I have consented to receive as guests. The first three will arrive to-morrow ; the King of the Diamond Mountains, a handsome young prince lately come to the throne ; the Prince of the Golden Islands, very wealthy, and whose father is so old, that he is only waiting for the Prince to marry, that he may resign the crown to him ; and Prince Ramme, brother to the King of the Land of Verbenas ; of whom I may as well say, that I receive him solely on account of my friendship for his late father ; for I disapprove entirely of his mode of life, which is that of a knight-errant rather than a prince ; and whom I prohibit your favouring altogether,—inasmuch as though he is said to be extremely fascinating, and a prince of great learning, accomplishments, and personal prowess, dark tales are afloat of some mystery which throws a shadow upon his life ; therefore I warn you against him. Zurica, you are ever ready to assist in making my Court bright with elegance and gaiety, ever prompt to charm, and to elicit all that is sparkling and graceful in others.

But Aymah, my child, seldom do you gladden us with your presence, and perceiving that our revels suit not your love of retirement, I have hitherto permitted you frequently to absent yourself; now it must be otherwise, you must accompany your sister on all occasions; and for both I have given orders, that whatever you may choose to ask for, of jewels and robes, be given you from my treasury. Let me then, in return, see my children uphold the splendour and dignity of my Court by their united efforts, that nothing be wanting whereby foreigners may judge of our importance, and our state."

The Princesses each in characteristic mood received these injunctions. Zurica, as the prospect of new gaieties and diversions, hailed the arrival of the stranger Princes; Aymah, as an irksome duty, promised to obey her father's commands. Sadly she returned to her forsaken bower, thinking of her drooping flowers, her silent lute, and how she should miss the cherished visits of her beloved godmother; and that night when the moon rose, she sailed forth on the calm sea with the good genius of her life,

to take a last look at the sea-maidens' palace, and, for how long she knew not, bid farewell to the pearly grottoes and crystal caves of those cool retreats.

The next day, amidst crowds of admiring beholders, the three royal visitors arrived. The King of the Diamond Mountains was gorgeously apparelled in a suit of velvet, powdered with jewels, and his train of attendants occupied a whole street, together with sixteen Ethiopian slaves who walked two and two, the first eight leading each an Arabian horse of great value, as a present to the King; the others bearing vases of precious stones, gold, and perfumes, also intended as presents.

The Prince of the Golden Islands was likewise attended by many slaves, and arrived in great state on a white elephant, whose trappings were of gold. He was much applauded by the people, of whom not a few were propitiated by showers of gold, which he flung amongst them from his howdah.

The third arrival was that of Prince Ramme, brother of the King of the Island of Verbenas.

He came alone, without attendants, without rich garments, without largess to the crowd: yet it was observable that his graceful person, and the manner in which he raised his plumed cap from his handsome brows, gained many and hearty acknowledgments from the excited populace. He wore a suit of sombre velvet, without ornaments, except that a magnificent opal fastened the feather in his bonnet. He rode a chestnut horse of remarkable symmetry, which had carried him safe through many a journey, and unharmed from many a fray. He was followed only by his faithful dog, whose affection for his master was marvellous to behold, and who it was rumoured had more than once saved his life from imminent peril.

Both these animals were wild and fierce. The horse would never suffer any one but the Prince to mount him, nor would Callyx, the faithful hound, permit any one else to approach him. With these two attendants, and his own good sword, Prince Ramme passed the season of his youth in searching through the world for adventures. Notwith-

standing his poverty, and his lack of kingdom, slaves, and gold, he made a great sensation at Court. No one could compete with him in feats of arms, none were like him in the chase, and in respect of daring and bravery he was unrivalled. He was soon attracted by the exceeding beauty of the Princess Zurica, and as he was perpetually remarking that he never meant to marry until his brother died, who was young and in the vigour of health, he was considered an agreeable and harmless personage; and the old King began to pay less jealous heed when he saw Prince Ramme at Zurica's bridle-rein, guiding her palfrey through forest mazes when they followed the chase, or dancing with her in the marble halls of the palace night after night. But the Princess never meant to marry Prince Ramme; poor and landless, she would have scorned his alliance, though she delighted in his attentions; indeed, the truth was, that she intended eventually to accept the King of the Diamond Mountains, as soon as she could make up her mind to give up her freedom for his wealth.

There was one thing about Prince Ramme that was very mysterious. At certain times of the day or night he used to disappear; no one ever knew what became of him, and no one dared inquire, for he wore a look on his return, which ever repelled vulgar curiosity; but people could not help remarking that he was pale and worn, as if he had undergone great mental or bodily fatigue; and Callyx would lie exhausted by his side for an hour afterwards, from time to time licking his hand, as if to soothe and comfort him. At first this mystery caused a great sensation among the courtiers, who were inclined to stand aloof from the Prince, as one who held commune with evil spirits; but he soon won them back by his fascinating manner, and people forgot to wonder, and ceased to condemn, or pity. Not so the Princess Aymah. With deep commiseration and a sad heart, she watched him whenever she could do so unperceived; she saw his gayest hours had their darkness, and his brightness its terrible shadow, and she longed to help and console him.

Callyx soon found out her sweet and gentle disposition, and would lie on a cushion at her feet, allowing her to caress and play with him, when he would not suffer Zurica to approach him, notwithstanding the coaxing and persuasion of his master.

Now Prince Ramme beheld in Aymah, a gentle harmless child, not by any means to be compared with her sister, and did not often trouble himself to notice her; while she, who had never before dreamed of envying her sister, could now think of nothing but the fascinating stranger, and wish she had a share in Zurica's brilliant gifts. Far from finding it irksome to obey her father's wish, that she should be constantly with the Court at all hours of the day, she forsook her familiar haunts, and was for ever wandering about amidst the gay saloons, or listening, hidden from sight, to the stories of the strange adventures with which the Prince used to charm and fascinate Zurica and her attendants.

One evening, as the sun went down, the whole Court with the three foreign Princes went forth to

sail in the beautiful bay, which washed the last turfy terrace of the palace gardens. The sky glowed with red and gold down to the horizon, while above the palace, in deep and cloudless azure, rose the crescent moon, pale and lovely, with her attendant star—

“Like the fair handmaid of an Eastern Bride.”

The air was laden with the scent of orange and citron trees, brought from the land on the wings of the evening breeze.

In the boat with Zurica sat her three princely lovers, and Aymah reclined in the shadow of the sail, leaning over towards the water, and from time to time smiling at the little mermaidens who lifted up their pretty faces unseen by all but her, stringing amber and pearls with long threads of seaweed, which they bound in their hair, and linking together their white arms in frolicsome dances.

She was listening sadly to the bewitching converse of Prince Ramme, who was telling legends of African magicians, and of the wondrous adventures he had had in their country, when suddenly a beautiful

many-coloured fish swam by, and every one sprang forward to see it.

“Oh!” said the Princess Zurica, clasping together her lovely hands; “how I wish I had that beauteous creature! bright glittering thing, I would I held you captive!” And stretching out her arms, she looked round as much as to say, “Will none of you bring it to me?”

Prince Ramme immediately leaned forward, and on the impulse of the moment plunged into the water. He swam well, and for some moments kept close to the fish. The other Princes, not to be behind their rival, jumped overboard likewise; but, being laden with jewels, and encumbered with their gorgeous habiliments, they began to sink lower and lower into the waves, till at length they called out for help; and the noise, confusion, and bustle of getting them into the boat again, were so great, that no one had time to think of Prince Ramme, who, led on by the excitement of the chase, swam further out to sea.

A little group of purple clouds which had been

hovering on the horizon, were by this time so much increased in size as to portend a storm ; the waves began to heave, and the shriek of sea-birds sounded ominous to the ear.

The Princess Aymah had long ere this seated herself in the stern of the boat, waiting and watching with eye intent. She beheld the dark line of waters deepening to indigo, as heavy masses of clouds rolled up the arch of heaven, behind which, in bright pulsations, flickered the red angry lightning. All on board was confusion and fright, Zurica commanding the boatmen to row to shore, and the two princes, dripping from the waves, storming and fuming at the rowers ; only Aymah's faithful eyes beheld the white spot on the dark waters, a speck in the distance.

Her time was now come, she glided from the stern, and seating herself on a crested wave called to the mermaidens to help her. One of them rose instantly to the surface, and hand in hand they sailed in haste to the distant speck of quivering white, and just ere he sank beneath a great black

wave, the Prince felt his arms uplifted, and his head sank unresistingly on Aymah's shoulder. His eyes closed, and in his exhaustion he thought his death hour was come; for he knew that the mermaids restore not to earth the mortal whom they find drowning.

How long he floated thus over billow and through storm, he never knew; but when he awoke he was lying on the sheltered turf in the palace gardens with Callyx by his side.

He rose, went in, and dressing himself with unwonted brilliancy descended to the banquet, exceedingly and justly incensed at the heartless conduct of Zurica; more especially, as on entering the hall he perceived her seated between the rival Princes, decked with smiles, and apparently unconscious of his absence. But as the evening went on they danced: and such was the power of her bewitching smile, that once more he was at her side, her slave and admirer; and Aymah looked out of the silken draperies of the window, thinking of how she had saved him, and he knew it not.

The next day the King and all the Court rode out on a hunting expedition to the adjoining forest. Aymah only remained at home.

She was sitting towards noon at an open lattice, singing to her lute, and delighted, in the absence of listeners, to enjoy the music of her own voice, when suddenly she heard a dreadful noise, as of people wrestling in the corridor; then silence. Her lute fell from her hand, and she beheld with wondering horror the hanging curtain pushed aside, as Callyx entered; his head drooping, his eyes bloodshot, his tongue out, and his limbs trembling. He crawled slowly across the marble floor, and licking her hand feebly, seemed to entreat her to follow.

She rose up, and went into the outer chamber, where, on a couch, she beheld Prince Ramme stretched like one in death. His eyes were closed, his face was ghastly pale, his clothes torn, and his hands bleeding, as if he had been engaged in a dreadful struggle for life. The Princess called none to aid, as she bathed his brow with sweet essences, though she trembled sadly, and could scarcely sustain the

golden cup that held them. Still he did not recover. She grew more and more sad to see his eyes closed in silent forgetfulness ; and was about to call at length for help, when Callyx appeared, dragging by its silken ribbon her lute, which he laid at her feet.

She mechanically touched its strings, and sang a soft and gentle lullaby. The prince opened his eyes, and started to find himself there, with Aymah kneeling by his side ; but he besought her not to cease playing, and she sang to him until the colour returned to his face, and he was himself again.

He thanked the Princess warmly, and said she reminded him of the mermaid who had saved his life from drowning : at which Aymah smiled and said nothing ; but Callyx knew better, for he licked her tiny hands, and looked at her with his wise eyes as if to thank her. At length the Prince arose, and kissing the hand of the Princess Aymah, with a mournful air, said—

“Fair Princess, do not mention this incident to any one, it might be a great misfortune to me to have it known ; but it may be grateful to your kind

heart to know, that I had in all probability died on this couch, but for your care, and your sweet voice. I have never heard music since I came to your father's court, and music at this hour has delivered me from a thralldom, of which such as you can know nothing. Adieu."

He descended into the courtyard, vaulted on his steed, and was seen no more until the evening, when he appeared gay, brilliant, and fascinating as ever. He now often spoke to Aymah, and drew her forward, or danced with her, and would tell her of the fair and beauteous lands he had visited, striving in every way to amuse and please her.

One evening Aymah was in her bower alone, meditating on the change that had come over her life, when she heard the fluttering wings of the doves that drew her godmother's chariot, and in another moment, the fairy Patientia stood before her.

"My child," she said, "though of late I have not visited you often, I have watched you closely, and I see you are not happy; tell me all about it." As the princess told her of the proceedings of the

last few days, the fairy looked sad and grave ; at length she said,

“ My dear god-daughter, the most important epoch of your life is now at hand. I have a proposal to make to you. Doubtless you remember the Alabaster Tower at the foot of the Green Mountains, where oftentimes you have dwelt with me, and whither I occasionally resort ; I propose that you should come there and rest for a time. You say you are unsettled and unhappy ; you think that this young prince loves you not, yet some inward conviction assures you that you alone truly understand his inner heart, that you could arouse his better self, and lead him onward to the ambition of a higher and nobler life. Believe this, my Aymah, if your surmisings are indeed true, the opportunity will be given you to serve him thus, in due time. If not, you will be spared much disquietude and many griefs in yonder tower, and I will be often with you. There, nothing can distress you, your sweet voice can raise itself without fear of reproach, and within those Alabaster halls

everything will tend to soothe and quiet you ; while, should your thoughts, as you fear, be only the romantic aspirations of youth, I will teach you to forget him, and to learn happiness with me."

Aymah spoke few words, but her reliance on the good fairy was habitual, and she was taken in the magic chariot to the Alabaster Tower.

Three days she had dwelt there, in its calm and beautiful solitude, when one evening she strolled forth after the heat of the day, to enjoy the cool sweet breeze, amid the winding paths that led to the foot of the nearest mountain ; and sitting down on a moss-grown bank, she sang to herself one of the plaintive songs she most loved.

Suddenly she was surprised to see Callyx running towards her, evidently in great perturbation, beseeching her with gestures to follow him. She flew in haste down avenues and through shady groves, till, arriving at an outer gate, she beheld lying on the ground with dishevelled hair, pallid face, and blood-stained hands, Prince Ramme ; his favourite steed standing near, all embossed with foam. A

little brook ran gurgling by, and from it Aymah fetched water in her hands, and began to bathe his death-like countenance. He showed no signs of life ; but, remembering how he had been restored to consciousness before, she sang to him in a strain so mournful, that the spice trees above her head wept fragrant tears, and rocked their branches to and fro as if in sorrow. By and by the features relaxed, the eyes unclosed, the hue of health began to return, and the Prince rose up astonished to find himself there, and still more astonished to see who was bending over him. At last he spoke thus :—

“I cannot help thinking, fair Princess, how like you are to the little mermaid who saved my life in that terrible storm.”

So the princess told him all about it ; and that she it really was.

“Ah !” said Prince Ramme, “how much then I owe you. Three times you have saved my life. It is right, now, that I should tell you my melancholy story.

“You must know that in my youth, I had the

misfortune to offend an evil fairy, of wicked and vindictive nature. She, in revenge, consigned me to the domination of a bad spirit who was subject to her. I am never safe from its visitations; it comes to me on every occasion, when anything, however trivial, occurs to disturb or annoy me. You have, I doubt not, beheld my sudden disappearance from balls, revels, and diversions of the court; at such times I could but run away, with what power of self-control remained, to prevent myself becoming a hideous spectacle to those around me. Those even whom I most esteemed or loved, I should have fallen upon in my delirium, and beaten, abused, or called evil names. I could but fly from them, mount my faithful steed, and, hurried by the fiend, tear about amongst dark tangled forests, and through dangerous wilds, followed only by Callyx, whom in my passion I often struck and ill-treated, but who never forsook me.

“Then would the demon, mounted on a horse that breathed forth flames, chase me till I fell exhausted; and, as you but now beheld me, at the brink of death.

“Nothing then revives me but music, which has such power over me that it will sometimes chase away the tormenting fiend, even before he seizes me in his grasp.

“When the fairy thus delivered me to her familiar, she said I should never recover myself, or be emancipated from this tyranny, until I met with some one whose love for me would induce her to become my wife, despite my cruel misfortune. I once thought that your sister ——”

“Zurica! ah! happy Zurica!” sighed the poor little Princess to herself.

“I once believed your sister would in time have loved me: she encouraged me to think so too; but she has long since undeceived me, and destroyed any regard I ever presumed to entertain for her. Princess Aymah, you have thrice saved my life. This proves to me how kind and tender is that heart, which seeks only to do good actions for the love of true benevolence.

“I have no wealth to offer you; my father’s kingdom is my elder brother’s; I am not likely to

outlive him. Mine is a wanderer's life ; I have no settled abode ; I am ever haunted by an evil spirit, which so maddens me, that, when I am under its influence, I say and do harsh things to those I love best. But I have that within me still, unsatisfied and craving, which longs to be lifted from this grovelling earth ; which would fain mount higher, and cease to beat the dusty ground with fluttering wings ; which seeks some true and guileless nature to which it might cling, for over such the demon could have no power. To such an one I would devote my life—my sole thoughts would be to make her happy. Will you be that good angel who shall save me from myself ?”

The Princess trembled and grew pale, as Prince Ramme knelt before her with these pleading words. At length, folding her hands as in prayer, she lifted up her clear and truthful eyes to his, and said, softly,—

“ Prince, I fear not the demon ; I will be your wife, and nothing but death shall ever divide us more.”

So they went hand in hand to the Alabaster Tower, where the fairy Patientia heard their betrothal. Looking on Aymah's placid face with a sad smile,—

“Ah, my Princess!” she said, “and is it come to this? Well, you have made your choice. I have taught you many things, dear child. You will have need of all. Your life, I foresee, will be one of trial and hardship; but you are good, and true-hearted, and to injure such the world has no power. Be self-denying; be slow to think evil of others; be faithful and true. This is my parting advice. My marriage-gift is this little golden phial and this ring. The sapphire it is made of was wrought by gnomes, in the mountains. When sorrow approaches you, it will be clouded and dark; if danger is at hand, it will emit sparks of fire.

“The liquid in this phial is one large drop from an enchanted fountain, the entrance to which is guarded from mortal intrusion by dragons, serpents, and terrible creatures, and which only a higher power than theirs can obtain, by lulling its grim

defenders to rest. When you are in trouble, touch it with your lips ; if any you love suffer, do the same for them. It is but one drop ; yet if you do not wantonly spill it on the ground, it will never be exhausted. Farewell, my children."

Thus Aymah and Prince Ramme were united, and set forth immediately on their journey ; the Prince intending to take his bride to the king his brother's court, and having presented her there, to choose some sweet dwelling-place in the Land of Verbenas, where they might pass their lives in blissful rest.

Day by day passed ; the Princess Aymah became an altered being. She, whose voice was heard so seldom of old, was now so happy that the woods resounded with her silvery laugh ; and when they stayed to rest in cool groves, beside purling streams, she was so gay and light of heart that the Prince was every day more charmed with her, and became as glad-hearted and as happy as herself. Never once had the terrible demon as yet interfered to mar their joy. And so the time passed on.

At length, one bright noon, as they were sitting in

a green glade amidst the mazes of a forest, enjoying the cool delicious shade ; the Princess had been singing, and had laid aside her lute while they took their repast of fruit and fair water, when suddenly Callyx disturbed the prince by barking at a squirrel which they were watching, and which was thus scared away.

In a moment Aymah beheld his countenance change ; he rushed to his horse, leaped on its back, and spurred him madly into the forest ; while she fancied she saw a dark and shadowy form seated behind him as he disappeared.

Though she was so gentle and tender, Aymah had a brave and patient spirit ; she did not give way to unavailing tears.

Prince Ramme had often warned her, if such a thing should befall him, not to sit down lamenting, but to seek him, lest they should lose each other for ever. Therefore, she walked on through the wild and gloomy forest, never heeding its dangerous pitfalls, or the fierce creatures that, seeing her alone, and deeming her an easy prey, lurked among the

trees ; or the crawling serpents that hissed at her as she passed by. She thought only of her beloved prince, how she might best reclaim him, and bring him to her side again.

The hours passed by : noon became evening ; the shadowy outline of the trees grew fainter and more shadowy in the twilight ; darkness was descending upon the forest. She glanced at her ring ; it was clouded, but no fire sparkled in its azure depths. Now she raised the phial to her lips ; its taste was as the sweetest cordial ; and, placing it in her bosom, she went on in renewed strength. By and by the trees receded on either hand, and she stepped out, at length, on a green plain in the heart of the forest. The moon was now shining, and by its light she beheld with unspeakable joy the well-known outline of the faithful steed, bending over a dark object stretched upon the ground, while Callyx, with a bound of delight, sprang forward to greet her.

Thus she found her husband, but so changed and so exhausted, that it was long ere even her voice could awaken him to life.

Still and sorrowful they both were, especially the Prince, who had fondly believed that the enemy of his peace had abandoned him for ever, and who sorrowed most of all for the weary, foot-sore Princess, who rested her head on his bosom. But Aymah would not let him grieve or despond, she touched his lips and her own with the precious elixir, and then talked and sang to him until he forgot everything but her presence.

Oftentimes after this did the demon pursue Prince Ramme, whirling him away he knew not whither ; but nothing could ever separate him from Aymah. No matter where or when the fit came upon him, or how terrible it was, she would go forth to seek him, and at last prevailed. She persuaded him to wrestle with the demon, to struggle for the mastery ; and by degrees he became possessed of an inward power to resist it. Then Aymah would sing to him, and together, more than once, they chased the fiend away, and her husband loved her more and more for her quenchless hope, her gentle patience, and her cheerful spirit.

At length their journeyings were well nigh over ; they were approaching his brother's kingdom, and they were sorry ; for their life of wandering, despite its trials, had been one of great happiness to both. Prince Ramme, also, began to entertain inward doubts as to their reception in the Land of Verbenas. They were a proud race from which he sprang ; his brother was a fierce and impracticable man ; he was bringing to that stately court a dowerless bride ; how would they be received ? But he would not vex Aymah's gentle spirit with these doubts, or suggest sorrowful thoughts to her who had done so much for him, and was so precious in his eyes.

One day he had a fierce struggle with the demon, a struggle in which truly he won the victory, but which cost him dear. The Princess found him lying by the side of a wide and rapid stream. When he revived he looked on Aymah with a sorrowful countenance and said,—

“ My dear wife, I am at last worn out ; I am going to trouble you no more. I had hoped to have placed you under my brother's care, but that cannot be, for

I am dying. I have long expected this, but it has come suddenly at last. Hear, then, my last injunction. When I am dead, place me in this stream, and let me float away on its bosom ; better so than to be left here. I have only Callyx to leave you ; my faithful horse is dead. For you alone I grieve ; but this will be your consolation, I have conquered the demon, and he has no hold on me in this final hour. We shall not be separated long ; by and by you will come to me. I would that I had been spared to guard and defend you till we reached home ; but that is, for some wise purpose, denied us. Grieve not for me ; I am at rest : and for yourself, fear not, for you are steadfast and true of heart, and nothing can harm you."

Whilst he thus spoke his breathing grew more feeble, his eyes closed, and, but for the clasp of his hand on her own, Aymah would have thought he was gone ; but, as she was bending over him, heedless of everything around, her eye caught the ring on her right hand, which emitted sparks of fire, and, turning, she beheld Callyx crouching on the

ground, terrified at the apparition of a dark form which had emerged from the shadow of the trees, and was looking at them with a grim satisfaction. She knew this to be the fiend who had so long triumphed over her husband. Her first impulse was fear ; but instinctively she put the little phial to her lips, and chanting softly, in her sweet low tones, a beautiful air which had before saved Prince Ramme from the clutches of the demon, she beheld it grow pale and ghastly, and the next instant, with fearful shrieks and howlings, it fled into the forest. Then, unable to bear up any longer, she fainted by the side of her husband.

When she awoke to consciousness she thought she was dreaming, or suddenly transported to some other land ; for she beheld around her, instead of the forest-trees, draperies of rosy satin, looped back with gold. A brocaded coverlet was spread over her ; the light from the window was tempered by stained glass of deep and gorgeous dyes ; and carpets of many-coloured velvets prevented the lightest footfall from being heard upon the inlaid floor. Delicate perfumes

floated through the apartment ; flowers in jewelled vases were placed here and there ; and silken robes of costliest fabric were spread out before tall mirrors in silver frames, from which strings of pearls and diamonds, with many rare and costly gems, depended. But, as half-unconsciously she beheld all this magnificence, she started up, calling for her husband, and crying beseechingly to the water-nymphs not to carry him away from her, for she thought he had floated down the stream, where she had found him, as she believed, dying. What, then, was her happiness, to see him with his own hand draw aside the curtain, and, kneeling down by her, she heard him assure her of his safety !

“ My dear sister,” said a strange voice, which she knew not, “ be at rest ; you are safe with your husband in the Land of Verbenas, and the Queen and I welcome you right heartily to our palace.” Thus saying, the King stood before her, leading by the hand his beautiful Queen, who, embracing Aymah, told her that they should henceforth be sisters, and share the troubles and pleasures of royal

life together. But at length, as the summer went by, and Aymah recovered her strength, she and Prince Ramme agreed that, kind as the King and Queen were to them, they should be happier away from the court, in a small dwelling embowered in the midst of beautiful gardens, which belonged to the Prince, but which, in his unsettled wandering life, he had always hitherto avoided on account of its retirement. A thousand workmen and gardeners were immediately sent thither by the king, who desired in all things to please his brother and sister, and whose interest in their romantic adventures was sincere. Here they lived in great happiness and quietude for some time, but were not destined to remain.

One evening they sat together, as was their wont, by a window which commanded a lovely view of their bright little domain, beyond which rose the distant towers of marble, which flanked the gateway of the palace, and stretching far in the distance the dark trees of the forest, whence they had so lately come; and were recalling that eventful period of their lives, while Prince Ramme told Aymah,

how, as they lay on the banks of the stream to all appearance dead, the Fairy Patientia, who had beheld their trials, and was never very far away, had restored them to life; banished the demon for ever, over whom she had a mysterious power, and, bringing them to his brother's palace in her magic car, had given them as a sacred trust into his keeping. As he was speaking of those past troubles, and comparing with them the happiness of their present life, they beheld a horseman riding hotly down the avenue; and in due time a messenger was announced, bearing despatches which he might only deliver to the Prince in person. When he returned, after the lapse of an hour, Prince Ramme, finding Aymah still musing by the open window, came and sat down by her side, and taking her hand, said,

“My beloved wife, we have borne much sorrow together, and known much joy, and we both looked forward to spending our future lives in this fair retreat, away from the bustle of courts and the turmoil of the world; but it has been otherwise ordered.

“It is my task to communicate to you the intelligence I have just received, and though I know it will be painful to you as to me, I believe you will agree to my decision, as our evident duty.

“This letter is from the King, your father; he is at this moment in great affliction.

“It appears that your sister Zurica, after we left the court, married, against her father’s wish, the King of the Diamond Mountains, who immediately set out with her for his kingdom. He had no sooner arrived there, and the wedding festivities held in their honour being over, than he began to reproach her with all the slights and humiliations to which, in her gay and thoughtless coquetry, she had subjected him before their marriage; and as her haughty and determined spirit would not suffer her to strive by gentleness to soften his resentment, but rather gave him fresh cause for anger, he grew more and more tyrannical, till at length he shut her up in a tower of stone, where she died: whether from grief, starvation, or loss of freedom, is not known. Your father, lamenting over her untimely end and

your absence, has written me an entreating letter, begging me, for the sake of my father's memory (who was his greatest friend), to let him see you once more before he dies, for he is growing old and infirm ; and he further tells me, that if I will but consent to become his successor, he will too thankfully resign his kingdom to us.

"Whether this be too great a sacrifice, or whether we decide to accept it, he implores me to bring his only remaining child to receive his last blessing.

"The government of your father's kingdom, my Aymah, is a weighty responsibility. But, fain as I am to decline it, it seems to me that it would be wrong to do so,—and with you by my side to help me to keep in straight paths, I would not shrink from it. And though we must give up this happy home, now become endeared to us as our first resting-place, we may yet be very happy, and the instrument of good to others in our future kingdom. I have, therefore, written to the King your father, saying, that in nine days from this we shall

be in his presence. Have I done what seems best in your eyes?"

"You have done right, dear prince," said Aymah, "and though it is not what we should have chosen for our future, we shall be happy, I doubt not, in striving for the welfare of our subjects."

So Aymah and Prince Ramme became King and Queen of her native country, to the great rejoicing of the whole kingdom. And so wise and happy was their reign, that their names were treasured up in the memory of their adoring people, long after the golden tomb which was erected over them at their death, disappeared with the lapse of ages.


THE LITTLE LAME LORD.



THE LITTLE LAME LORD.

THERE lived, long ago, a very wealthy nobleman who had several children, two of whom were sons. The eldest of these was exceedingly handsome, and the idol of his father and mother. Their delight was to give him every indulgence that could be devised, and nothing gave them so much gratification as to have him praised and caressed: and, indeed, there was some excuse for them; for with all the advantages of rich dress, great personal beauty, and a certain good-natured way he had when nobody thwarted him, the young lord always appeared to advantage, and, considering all things, was less troublesome, and spoiled, than might have been expected. The daughters of this noble house were likewise

very beautiful, and seldom did a week pass, without grand entertainments of some kind being held at the castle. Tournaments occasionally gathered there the chivalry of the land, and not unfrequently the King himself, who was godfather to the young Conrade, honoured these brilliant assemblies with his presence ; balls were held in the great hall, to which knights and ladies came from far and near ; and hunting parties, like little armies for multitude, chased the game in the adjoining forests, or through the broad domains. But there was one child, the youngest, of whom little was known by these gay frequenters of the castle. He was rarely seen ; and though they did not acknowledge it, his parents secretly felt ashamed that he should appear beside his handsome brother and sisters, for he was born lame ; and he was so fragile and delicate, and in his tastes and habits so different from other children, that, misunderstanding his nature, and being unable to appreciate the beautiful soul which God had given him, they felt a kind of impatient distress whenever he came in their way ; and though



they were not unkind, and commanded that he should be surrounded by every comfort, and the attendants they considered befitting his degree ; with an intuitive perception, the child felt that he brought a shadow with him into their presence, and learnt to spend most of his time alone.

His favourite resort was a beautiful little room in one of the turrets which flanked the court-yard. It was lighted by three windows. One of these looked upon the ground where the jousts were held, whence he could behold the gay scene, and watch his elder brother, who, mounted on a black palfrey, used to tilt with the young Prince and the little nobles who attended him. This was like a moving picture to Gerard, who idolized his brother, whom he thought far more beautiful than the King's son, and looked upon him as a superior being ; weaving day by day marvellous romances in his mind, of which Conrade was the hero.

There he beheld his mother, and his fair sisters in their brilliant array, and felt proud to think they

belonged to him. But the chief object of his admiration was his father, whom he thought grander than any Paladin of old, and whose stately presence filled him with a mingled awe and delight. There were times, few, and far between, when his father came to visit Gerard in his favourite retreat ; always alone, and always with an observance of secrecy, as if ashamed of being seen there ; but when he did come he was kind, and entered in a sort of wondering way into the strange conversations of the child, bringing with him some costly gift, or curious toy, and, never leaving his little son without a feeling that he was above the common mould of mortals ; for he himself was a man of higher attainments than his compeers, and perhaps, in a less warlike age, might have learned to know how little was the defect of Gerard's person, compared to the beauty of his mind. But ever, when he felt most attracted towards him by some wise saying, or by the beaming out of his spirit, in the delicate, expressive countenance of the boy, *some* unfortunate movement, or the sound of the

crutches on the floor, would restore his prejudiced and vexed remembrance of those manly sports in which the poor little Gerard could never bear a part; and he would stride moodily away, to console himself by caressing the handsome Conrade, who could ruffle it with the bravest and most noble or to listen with a gloomy brow to the lamentations of his injudicious wife. Another of the windows in Gerard's apartment looked beyond the moat and drawbridge, to the distant hills and plains, amongst which the high road wound. Here might be seen passing, the guests who went to and from the castle, the litters or palfreys of the ladies, and the knights and their esquires, often with a large following of armed retainers, for the times were troublous. Now and then, a procession of priests went by on their mules, upon whose gay vestments and glittering croziers the sun shone brightly; and often they chaunted on their way beautiful harmonious music, which made little Gerard think of the angels and their harps of gold.

The third window, where he often sat when the

bustle of the other scenes became wearisome to him, commanded a view of the castle gardens, with their groves, their terraces, and their far-off boundary, the forest, in whose glades the hunting parties were wont to pursue their sport. Here Gerard loved to sit with his crutches beside him, and some old romance lying open on his knee ; his mind making a world for itself, wherein it lost sight of its daily existence. His life was a dream. The scenes he looked on from his turret windows, seemed so far off, so intangible to him who never mingled in them, that he could have thought they must be visions, and he a spirit while he beheld them, only for the rare visits of his father, whose hand he might kiss, though he never touched or fondled him, he knew why ; and for the remembrance that while he was yet obliged to be lifted in his nurse's arms, his brother had played with him, touched his cheek, and laughed and sported by his side ; and that once he had put his arms round Conrade's neck when he was sleeping, kissed his glossy curls and rosy cheeks, and felt his warm breath upon his face ;

but it was all so long ago, that he sometimes scarcely knew if even that were real.

From this apartment two flights of stairs led, the one to the main building of the castle, and the other to a private door which opened immediately into one of the side alleys of the garden; this was one of the reasons why Gerard loved it, for he could go in and out at all hours, unnoticed and alone.

Among the servants and retainers a superstitious belief prevailed that he was a changeling, and no one liked to be too familiar with the little lame lord. True, he was mild and gentle, and open-handed in his gifts, while most changelings were cross, mischievous, and ugly, and the gold they gave not unfrequently turned to pebbles in the pouch; but there was something in his quiet demeanour, large comprehending eyes, his hatred of wrong, and his quickness at detecting it, which made them shrink away involuntarily as the sound of his crutches was heard approaching, and they served him rather from fear of his father, than love for himself.

Thus Gerard lived in his father's castle, the resort of the greatest of the land, the seat of wealth and power, unable to enjoy the society of the one, and careless about the possession of the other ; as solitary as if he had no kindred, and as independent of all, as if he had been born a peasant's son, yet, because of his good and beautiful nature, never alone, for in their silent language, pure spirits of the air, for ever hovering near, whispered wonderful and lovely things in his ears, and opened his eyes to the knowledge of the unseen.

To Gerard's imagination, the vast gardens of the castle were an enchanted land. Giants inhabited the distant mountains, goblins the intricacies of the forest, and fairies the lovely groves and beds of flowers. The grounds were so spacious, that he did not imagine he could ever with his slow gait, explore their depths ; but he loved their unfathomed mystery, and liked to wander amongst them at will, peopling them with his fancies. There were birds which he used to feed, four-footed creatures that were tame to him, wood-pigeons that would wheel

round him, nearer by degrees, then settle upon his shoulder, and look into his with their loving eyes; squirrels, ordinarily so shy, would sit down on the path before him to eat; and all things living, and in nature, seemed to greet him with an affection which he knew how to interpret. As he grew older, he used to hirkle along, with his crutches, further distances into the forest; no one missed him, and his absence was unmarked.

It was in the spring of one year, that whilst he was wandering in the wood a strange adventure befel him.

He had thrown off his cap and his outer mantle, for the noon was hot, and he sat down to rest on the projecting root of a tree, in a lovely sequestered glade. Suddenly he heard a sound as of a delicate silver bugle note, winding through the forest. As this was not the hunting season, and moreover, there was sport in the tilt-yard with a royal tiger which belonged to the King, Gerard knew that it was no party from the castle. Brigands were said to resort thither; but this sound was so deliciously

soft and musical, it could not be their gathering-note, though faint it was clear, and not far off; something was at hand, he knew not what.

Gerard, notwithstanding his sensitive imagination, and delicate frame, knew no such thing as fear; and he sat still, watching with intense curiosity what new wonder should appear; for to him, the forest was a vast and endless treasure-store whose resources knew no limit.

Again the bugle was heard, accompanied by a rustling sound as if a flight of dry leaves was sweeping among the trees, and there appeared from every part of the forest multitudes of elves all clad in green, with belts of golden thread, caps of woven thistle-down, and lances tipped with the sharp talons of little birds, which being slightly curved, inflicted terrible wounds on the large wood-spiders, and other game. Some were mounted on field-mice, which were marvellously swift in the chase, and some were on foot. One, whose plumed bonnet surrounded by a circlet of minute diamonds, and the peculiar beauty and sleekness of his hunt-

ing mouse, proclaimed their King, rode forward and dismounted, and immediately his attendants did the same. He then ordered his bugler to sound again, and while yet the sweet note vibrated on the air, hundreds of other elves, similarly attired, thronged from amongst the furze and long grass, obedient to the summons. Gerard's delight was intense: he feared to move lest he should disturb them, and beheld them swinging upon the fern-leaves and tall foxgloves, darting the long-barbed stamens at each other in sport, from which the yellow dust besprinkled them as with gold; uncurling the young leaves to wrap themselves in, and hanging in fantastic attitudes to the feathery tassels of the larch trees; whilst the obedient little mice with their coats of quiet grey, and their brilliant trappings, nestled together, and stood waiting the pleasure of their riders.

For some time, the King, who had seated himself on the summit of an ant-hill, looked on with a dignified and complacent air, as if he rather permitted than sympathized in such sports. At length,

one tiresome little being, who wore a speedwell in his cap, and had a very pert and jaunty air, as if he thought much of himself, after many futile attempts to spring from the ground to the crest of a gigantic thistle, suddenly lost his balance, and tumbled head over heels amongst its spiked and prickly leaves. Then the King, smiling, as if he thought it a deserved and proper punishment for his conceited little follower, rose from his seat, and inquired if any one saw the Queen approaching ; upon which two or three elves who had perched themselves on the apex of a tall hemlock, cried out that she and her ladies were in sight. A second bugle sounded, and on the instant the tiny train was seen winding down the mossy path, amidst the ferns and wild-flowers that bordered it on either side. There was now a general rush to assist the elfin-ladies from their hunting-mice, and to lead them about amidst the beauties of the forest-nook ; while a tuft of the minutest and richest moss having been placed for the Queen to dismount upon, the King himself lifted her to the ground, and conducted her to a beautiful scarlet fungus, where

they sat apart, watching the dances and frolics of their subjects.

After conversing for some time, the Queen put aside the long gossamer veil which, depending from her crown, covered her bright costume of green and gold, and rising, advanced with the King to the spot where Gerard lay. They surveyed him for a moment with an air of ineffable pity and kindness, and the Queen then said,—

“Poor child, thou wast born to grief, but thy loving spirit, like a shield of silver, has turned aside the evil. Thou hast met with neglect, but hast not become unkind ; thou hast longed for love, but the lack of it hath not made thee unloving. Presently thou shalt have thy rich reward, a recompense above anything we can give thee ; but first we must repay our debts.”

“What does it mean ?” thought Gerard ; “what can they owe to me who never saw their like before ?”

“Yes,” said the King, stepping forward, “it is true. How many of our pensioners, the squirrels

and wild doves, hast thou fed and tended, as well in the wintry weather as in the summer-tide. This is the first time we have become visible to thee, but daily have we been near thee, watched, and loved thee; and many a pleasant surprise have we prepared for thee. Think of the nuts and blackberries that have bent the trees to earth; the rare flowers that none ever found but thee; the dry sheltered bowers, where the rain might not touch thee, close woven of the woodbine and clematis; the bright insects and moths which fluttered in thy path;—these, and a thousand such, we gave thee of our love. This forest is our dominion, but we haunt the castle-gardens too; and though we may not cross mortal threshold, so soon as thy foot is on the green sward outside the turret, some of us are near, removing all evil things, stinging reptiles, and sharp stones from thy path, and leading thee unseen into the fairest spots in these wild glades. This is especially our favourite resort. The tree beneath whose boughs thou reclinest, is enchanted, and in choosing it for a resting-place thine eyes were opened to behold us. Mark

it well ; beneath it is our palace, whose alabaster towers and floors of chrysolite no mortal eye has ever seen. Whenever thou shalt desire to look upon us, to watch the pastimes of our gay subjects, or to ask of us any boon, seek this spot, and feel secure of its being granted." Then turning to the Queen, he said, "Do thine errand." And she, laying her two little hands on the lame boy's crutches, wrought a spell on them, which gave them power to transport him at will to any place that he might choose, with extraordinary rapidity : then, having smiled on him with a benign and friendly aspect, they turned away. The fairy bugle, which was an unfading honeysuckle flower set in silver, again resounded through the glade ; the elves, quitting their sports, remounted their hunting-mice, and headed by their King and Queen, disappeared in the forest mazes.

From that time Gerard often visited the enchanted tree ; and if he expressed a wish for any costly gem, or rare flower, or rich perfume, the elfin messengers were sent to search the earth for it : and he daily knew more of the secrets of these hidden things, and

became less attached than ever to the pursuits and pleasures natural to one of his degree, as he grew more and more ardent in his love for the mysteries and the beauties of nature.

Amongst other beneficent gifts which the elfin King and Queen delighted to bestow on Gerard, was an intuitive knowledge of the wild herbs which grew profusely in the forest. From some of these he extracted rich colours, with which he often amused himself by tinting the great letters in his scrolls of romance, rhymes, and legends of saints and warriors. One plant there was which he especially prized, whose leaf was a sovereign cure for all wounds ; it grew in that enchanted glade where the elves were wont to sport. With it he often healed the torn and broken limbs of his favourites, the birds and squirrels, when cruel hawks or wild creatures had seized and hurt them.

At the castle, his long daily wanderings, his absent look when he returned, his shrinking love of solitude, and his disregard of the sports in which his brother most gloried, led the vassals to shun him

with a yet more nervous suspicion, and his father to postpone for yet longer periods his visits to the turret-chamber. Yet, though thus isolated from his kindred, and debarred their sympathy, the time was to come when his gracious and loving spirit should do its work, and prove even to their prejudiced and blinded souls what power is in truth and goodness.

It was now autumn. The woods were richer and lovelier than ever. What gold and russet decked the trees, so beautiful in decay! What wealth of wild fruits bent the supple branches to earth! What glowing colours bestrewed the ground, where, amidst the yellow leaves and tufted moss, scarlet berries and wild apples, dropped from their over-laden clusters, shone like coloured gems through the short grass! The depths of the forest looked wild and impenetrable, hidden at morn and evening by the purple mist, or partly lighted by the red setting sun; and amidst those winding mazes, whose intricacies he now knew so well, another adventure befel Gerard.

He was loitering in the vicinity of the enchanted

dell, imbibing, after his own silent dreamy fashion, the exceeding beauty of the scene, idly watching the sports of the squirrels as they chased each other up and down the trees, and lulled by a murmuring sound which a faint breeze awoke amongst the branches, when he heard a loud cry as of some one in distress. It struck with startling energy on his sensitive ear, and a dreadful horror came upon him as he thought it was his father's voice, and the remembrance flashed across his mind that he was powerless—lame.

It was a moment of agony ; but it passed, and his quiet self-possession came again. Seizing his crutches, which had fallen to the ground, they bore him swift as thought to the spot whence the cry had come ; and there, faint and bleeding, unhorsed, and with a broken lance in his hand, he beheld his father kneeling on the sward, and endeavouring to keep at bay a huge wild boar, in whose side the barbed head of the spear was fixed, and which, maddened by rage and pain, was trying to gore him with its tusks. At every movement the rankling dart, working its

deadly way, exhausted the creature's life-blood ; but there was yet strength left to wound, if not to kill its human foe. Gerard forgot his delicate wrists and small hands, bleached with feeble health and untrained to feats of strength, and seizing the hunting-knife his father had flung aside, he threw himself on the blind and angry beast and struck it behind the ear, with so true an aim, that it fell over on its side and expired. He then turned to see his father, who, too much exhausted to speculate on this unlooked-for deliverance, had sunk almost insensible to the ground. To fly to the fairy-glen for leaves from the healing-plant, was his next thought ; but as he took up his crutches, his eye caught sight of the well-known leaf ; and inwardly thanking the kindly elves for helping him in his need, he gathered a handful, and opening the hunting-vest his father wore, he found the wound from which was ebbing the dark silent life-stream, covered it with the magic herb, and bound closely upon it the hunter's silken scarf ; he then sat down to await the issue.

What moments were those ! All his deep human affections, so long suffered to lie dormant, awoke as from a dream. The old passionate yearning after the sympathy of his kind, never understood, but turned by his unsatisfied loving nature into other channels, rushed tumultuously to his heart, as he bent over the pale grand features, and the insensible form of the father he so idolized. He thought of the moment when he should open his eyes to behold his lame son whom he once thought so helpless, and knew that he had saved his life. This idea gave him such exquisite pleasure, that he sat like one entranced, half dreading the moment he so longed for, because it would break the silent spell and hurry him from his father's side ; and still he prayed that he might revive before the other hunters arrived, lest their presence should rob him of a single tender word or kind look. Divided thus between hope and fear, his eager glance detected a slight return of colour to the marble face ; the eyes opened and rested on him *with a wondering look, which melted into one more*

soft than belonged of right to those haughty features, as the confused recollection dawned of the enraged animal, and the slender arm that had struck its death-blow. Gerard now opened the silver flask which was a part of the hunting accoutrements, and put it to his father's lips ; bending down that he might catch his first words, and unconscious how his own spiritual and expressive countenance, lighted by his soul, was slowly kindling the answering looks of kindness with which the prostrate noble was regarding him. At length, he spoke, but before there was time for question or reply, the hunting horn sounded, and his father, pointing to the bugle suspended at his baldric, bade Gerard reply ; and immediately afterwards they heard the approach of the horsemen. During this time the afternoon sun had faded from the forest ; its depths looked deeper, and its winding paths yet more impenetrable, as the chill autumnal mist rose heavily from the ground, curling into fantastic shapes, and wreathing the trees with vapour. Some of the vassals who recognised the last bugle-call, arrived in haste, and

the scene they beheld was long told with awe round the hall fire after dark.

Their lord was lying motionless on the ground, his head supported by a stone, and his vest and mantle dyed with blood ; while hovering about in the thick mist with an activity strangely at variance with his usual quiet and melancholy aspect, was the lame boy, so far beyond the precincts of the castle that nothing short of magic could have brought him there.

Their first impulse was to shrink back : the hour, the scene, the loneliness, and gathering darkness, adding to their dread of evil spells and weird enchantments ; but their lord's rebuke recalled them to their senses, and some assembled round him, while the sight of the dead boar lying near amidst the bracken, aroused their sportsman's instinct in the rest. Meanwhile, Gerard, unconscious of the impression his own appearance created, and thinking only of his father, ordered the men to make a litter of some fallen branches, and stretching *him* carefully upon it, to lift it on their shoulders,

and proceed home ; who between awe, and a feeling that they must perforce obey his clear concise commands, made all haste to fulfil them. At this moment, the rest of the hunting train arrived, and among them, his brother, whom Gerard beheld bending over their father in anxiety and grief, and then turn his horse's head to ride home beside the litter. No one saw Gerard. Those who at first had beheld and obeyed him, believed that he had vanished into the mist ; and many a fearful glance they cast behind, as by and by the moon rose struggling through the cloudy vapour, making yet more eërie the sounds and shapes of the forest. But he whom they so wronged and feared, was left to commune with his thoughts on the spot where his father had lain, acting over again the past scene, and scarcely able to realize it. He knew no fear though the wood was gloomy and he was alone. His pure spirit, unsullied by evil thoughts, knew nothing but good of the great wide forest, the scene of so many happy hours. He forgot that his father had left him behind, that

his brother had passed him by unnoticed, and the very vassals avoided and looked askance at him.

The thought was enough that he had been in time (alas! how little more, and he had come too late!), that when no other help availed, he had done all that the strongest and bravest could have done to save life. Wrapt thus in reverie he recalled the words of the Elfin Queen,—“Thou shalt have thy rich reward; a recompense above anything we can give thee.” “Everything turns to blessings for me,” he thought; “I shall never forget this day, when I am wishing to be strong and handsome like Conrade.” In his unselfishness he never thought if his father would love him more, or come oftener to see him, or even if he would remember who it was that saved his life in such perilous extremity; it was sufficient for his happiness that he had done it. As his thoughts were busy with these musings, he was passing the fairy dell, and turning from the path he sat down at the foot of the enchanted tree. No sooner had he done so, than the moon, piercing the mist

with a brilliant beam, showed him the velvet sward covered with elves, who rather floated than danced in and out among the trees, headed by their King and Queen, who hand in hand led the graceful sport. Presently they came near, and listened to his gratitude as he spoke of the wonders wrought by the healing-plant, whose virtues they had taught him.

“Ah!” said the Queen, smiling upon him; “I told thee thou shouldst have joy. Even in this world such spirits as thine meet with gracious events which shed such light upon them as only they can know. Yet is there more in store for thee; go on thy quiet way; that which is to come will come in its time.”

Then they vanished; and he, finding himself alone, took up his crutches, and wished himself in the turret chamber.

The hunting-party were just arrived; and though still weak, the stanching of the blood, and the movement through the evening air, had so much revived the wounded noble, that he was able to

mount the broad marble stairs with the assistance of Conrade's arm, and was about to retire to his chamber, when, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he stopped at the door, and turning to the attendants desired that the young Gerard should be called to him. They were stammering out a confused reply, for though they dared not say it, they believed that he had vanished in the mist, and was still gliding about in the dark forest, when to their unspeakable fear and astonishment the sound of his crutches was heard in the corridor, and he appeared before them, quiet and pale as usual. Lifting up his large earnest eyes to his father's, he pleaded, in a half deprecating way, that he could not rest until he knew that he was recovering.

Laying his hand on Gerard's head, he smiled upon him, and spoke of his having saved his life by his promptness and care. Few words passed, but they were kind ones. Conrade and his father passed into the sleeping apartment together, and Gerard, neither wishing nor expecting more, huddled

away to his silent chamber, to retire again into that inner world in which his life was spent.

Shortly after this various events happened at the castle, to make its busy round of gaiety more stirring, and to be the first of those changes which break by degrees the circle of a home, and disperse its members.

The eldest daughter of the house had long been beloved by a foreign prince, who, under a feigned cognizance, had often appeared at the tilting matches and other diversions ; and her father and mother consenting to the marriage, she was wedded to him with great pomp and splendour.

The evening before her bridal, touched perhaps at the thought of leaving her home, amidst other soft remembrances came the image of the poor lame boy, her brother, of whom so little was known by those nearest akin to him ; and she desired that he might be brought to see her. He had heard of her approaching marriage, and had not neglected to provide himself with such a gift as might befit the bride. Little as she had ever

thought of him, he knew her well, and from his turret window had often beheld her stately and graceful form, and the face, which though softened by feminine beauty, the most resembled his father's, and had delighted in her accordingly. She was much touched, when in bidding her farewell he laid upon her lap a case of jewels unlike for lustrous beauty to anything she had seen before. And when, the next day, she departed to her new home in all the magnificence of a bride whose lord was of such high degree, he saw her draw aside the cloth of silver that curtained her litter round, and wave her white hand to him in token of adieu.

This he thought was another of those bright gleams which every now and then shone out upon his solitary life.

Again the inhabitants of the castle were stirred by a new event. A message arrived from the King. Sudden intelligence had reached him of a rebellion which had broken out in a distant part of the kingdom.—Winter was approaching: it must be

quelled at once, or the season of inactivity would give time to the insurgents to concentrate and organise their force, and the King called upon his chief estates to bring their retainers into the field. When his father was going to battle, how could Conrade bear to stay at home? Nor did his father wish it, but rather shared his son's impatient ardour, and delighted that he should fight by his side.

Never did fair lady fret and fume over the cutting of embroidered robes, as did Conrade, whilst the armourer was welding his suit of steel and silver, tempering his sword-blade, and fitting it to its wrought and inlaid handle; and never were the taper fingers of the ladies of the castle so weary of arranging banners, scarfs, and favours, as, under the superintendence of knight and noble, they plied their restless needles, working devices, and blending colours. At length the appointed day arrived, and in brave and glittering array the procession passed beneath the arched gateway, crossed the moat, and Gerard beheld them thread the winding road, a gallant and warlike train.

Weeks passed by ; almost daily couriers arrived with intelligence from the army : good news ; successful battles ; the enemy routed from burning villages, and rebellious towns retaken.

At last there came a silent melancholy band, with arms reversed and colours drooping. They entered the court-yard, they told their mournful errand : the war was over, the rebellion quelled, the lord of the castle and his victorious followers were on their way home ; but the eldest son, the pride of his family, the idol of his parents, the favourite of his King, had fallen. Stricken in mortal combat, he fell nobly by his father's side in the hot raging battle, and the lame and feeble Gerard succeeded to his inheritance.

A great change from this time came over Gerard's life. His father, from whose mind had never been effaced the remembrance of the scene in the forest, though subsequent events had weakened the impression, was the first to realize the truth that he was the sole representative of his ancient line, and *the heir* of all his wealth, and that he must be

honoured as such before the vassals, even though to fill Conrade's place, either in their hearts or in his home, were for him impossible.


His mother, heart-broken at the loss of her idolized son, was long before she could bear to see the lame boy where he had been.

But by and by, came the reaction. Gerard's beautiful and spiritualized countenance, his uncomplaining patience, and his unvarying endeavours to meet their awakening tenderness half way, so won upon them both as they daily came in closer contact with him, that, pierced likewise by keen regrets for the past, they clung to him with a love such as never had been Conrade's.

Nothing of outward observance was now sufficient to appease their remorseful conscience, or to satisfy their restless and lavish affection. Pages of gentle birth waited to anticipate his slightest wish; attendants lingered within call to obey his least command; costly attire, stiff with gold and jewels, strove to conceal the defect he had learned to bear so contentedly. Cages of foreign birds, and vases

filled with the rarest flowers, beautified the splendid suite of rooms which he inhabited now, that his tastes might in every way be gratified. Tapestry and velvets adorned his private apartment; and though he usually sat on the dais at his father's right hand, when the banquet hall was filled with guests, the furniture of his table, when he eat alone, was worth a knight's ransom. If he looked sad, music was called for, and the minstrel whose harp and song awoke his sweet bright smile, was sure of an ample guerdon. If he sighed to breathe the open air, a litter, fashioned so as to give him the most perfect rest, heaped with rich cushions and coverlets, embroidered by his mother's hands, was ready at a wish to transport him wherever he desired.

If he was seen to delight in some old manuscript, the neighbouring convents were offered large sums for their choicest tomes; and in the castle, the influence of the gentler arts seemed silently mingling with the love of warlike sports. Nothing that Gerard cared for could be worthless. His approval



secured good fortune and good will to its least object, and not a vassal won his regard for service, or kindly deeds, but was rewarded beyond his expectation.

His parents threw their whole souls into his daily life, and especially his father, who, better than any one appreciated the bent of his mind, and remembered with a sense of pain the tardy visits to the turret in past days. "He is our only son," they would say; and though all his pursuits and habits were the opposite of Conrade's, they were as carefully studied now, as though, like him, he had been strong and brave; while all that could remind him of the defect they now rather revered than deplored, was carefully removed out of sight or hearing.

And now it was that Gerard's true nature shone most brightly. What to him were the luxuries with which he was surrounded? The attendants were an embarrassment to him: and though he loved, and spoke kindly to the little pages who formed his retinue, and could not bear to keep them at

his side away from the diversions most natural to their age, yet, so unchildish himself, their voices, their noisy glee, and thoughtless unceasing gaiety, often grated on his spirit, attuned to higher things.

The slow even pace of the litter, from which he might not stir, and from which he saw but little of the haunts he loved so well, was wearisome to him ; and it fretted him sorely that he should know no other enjoyment of the free fresh air. How often did he long to be left alone with his crutches, once again to delight himself in the far-stretching forest, whose sylvan bowers were so familiar and so endeared to him.

His wide magnificent chambers, whose windows looked towards the royal city and the palace of the King, made him wish for his own quiet retreat, with its lovely prospects, its silence hallowed by gorgeous dreams, and holy, happy musings.

But when a tournament was held, he must now sit with his lady-mother in the balcony, one of the gay throng ; where the noise and confusion, the trampling of steeds, the clash of arms, and the cries, applause,

and terrors of the ladies, bewildered him, and were not like the moving pictures he had delighted in of old, when he beheld them from his far turret-window. And in the gardens he might never wander alone ; only in the full sunshine, mingling with the guests that thronged its bright parterres, might he recline by his mother's side, a captive.

But though to him, so used to solitude, this intent observance of his slightest mood, his change of countenance, or his least wish, were daily more burdensome and oppressive, he never betrayed impatience by look or sign, but received it with such smiles and gracious words as were it sample recompense. And in this lay the true self-denial. It was not what he wished, but what he ought to wish ; not what he felt, but what he ought to feel, that he strove to attain ; and so well did he succeed, that none ever dreamed how the strife was wearing him away. Yet, to one accustomed to live in the open air, this imprisonment was irksome beyond expression. He pined and grew pale : the blue veins on his temples and on his delicate hands

sweet air entered the apartment, and as it passed out again into the garden, the spirit of the lame boy went with it. Their eyes were fixed upon his face, they beheld the smile, the loveliest that had ever rested there, and they knew that he was dead,

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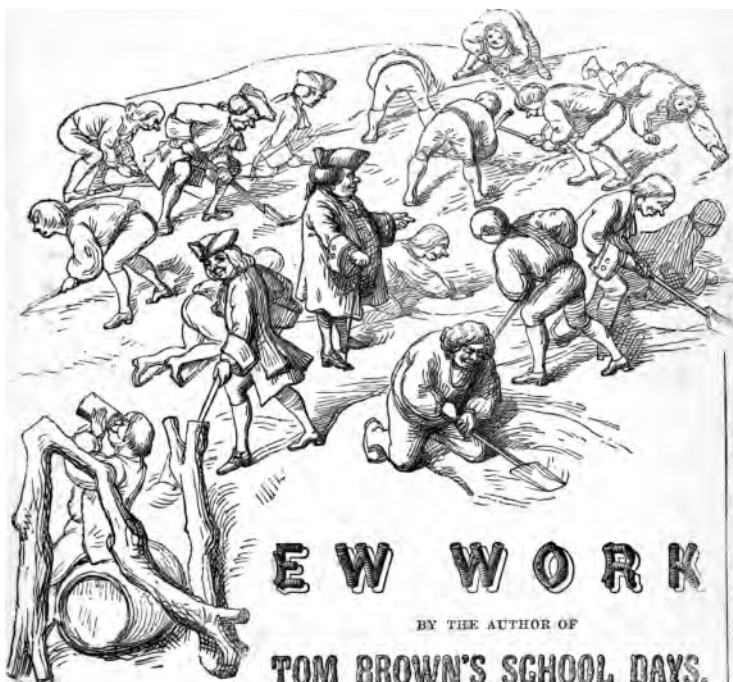
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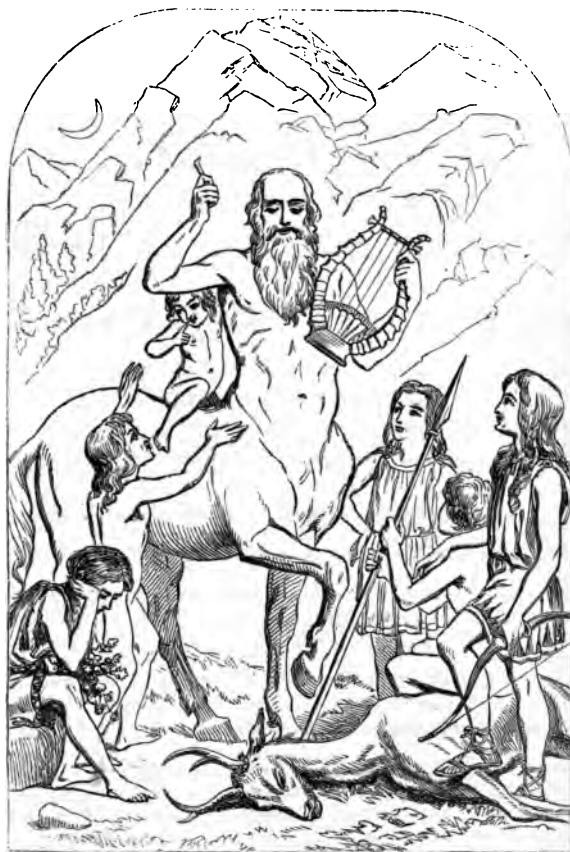
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